United States Department of State

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003

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PREFACE

U.S. policy to protect human rights springs from American ideals and our sense of national interest. But even more important than our high aspirations and purposes is the work and will that Americans have put into achieving them. From the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to the fight against slavery and racial inequality, to standing up to totalitarian menaces, Americans have proved capable of turning vision into action. And much work remains to be done.

This combination of idealism and practical policy implementation has become a hallmark of our foreign policy in the area of international human rights. We are proud to present to you *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003* – a report that for the first time in a systematic way captures the tireless work of the U.S. Government to promote democratic structures and respect for human rights. This document complements our annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* in substance and spirit, and details how we are applying the high standards of the *Country Reports* to the actions we are taking to decrease the number and severity of human rights abuses worldwide.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War emboldened us to think of a 21st century world of ever-expanding democracy and human rights. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the threats they exposed challenged us to strengthen our efforts to overcome the obstacles to building such a world. We are answering that call to action, because liberty and rule of law help prevent terrorism from thriving. We are committed to building on our ongoing efforts and continuing to work in partnership with the international community to anticipate and respond to pressing needs wherever they may arise.

By sharing what we are doing to prevent human rights abuses and advance democracy in every region of the world, *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003* also identifies promising approaches for all who are working toward a future in which brutality, tyranny and repression claim fewer and fewer victims and no longer possess the ability to fuel violent extremism in all its forms – where peace, equality and freedom are nurtured and protected by all. I hope you'll share this report with others who – like you – believe we can achieve this vision together

Colin L. Powell,
Secretary of State

OVERVIEW AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 665 of P.L. 107-228, the Fiscal Year 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which was signed into law on September 30, 2002. It requires the Department to report on actions taken by the U.S. Government to encourage respect for human rights. This report is being submitted to Congress for the first time and complements the annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002*.

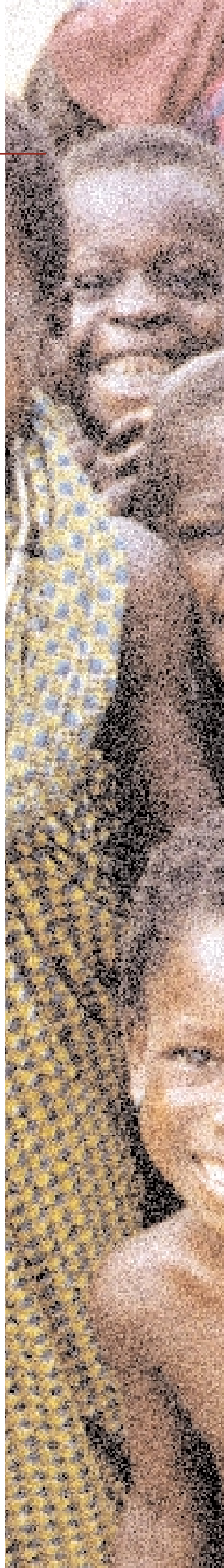
Unlike the 196 *Country Reports, Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003* highlights U.S. efforts to promote human rights and democracy in only 92 countries and entities –- the 92 with the most human rights abuses. References to Hong Kong, Macau and Tibet have been incorporated into the China report, and Western Sahara is mentioned in the Morocco report. Due to the rapidly evolving situation in Iraq, this report does not include that country.

The responsibility of the United States to speak out on behalf of international human rights standards was formalized in the early 1970s. In 1976 Congress enacted legislation creating a Coordinator of Human Rights in the Department of State, a position later upgraded to Assistant Secretary. This report takes the next step, moving from highlighting abuses to publicizing the actions and programs that the United States has taken to end those abuses.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003 reflects dedicated effort by hundreds of State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and other U.S. Government employees, as well as the employees of numerous non-governmental organizations. Our embassies and consulates prepared the initial drafts of the reports. After the missions completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, in cooperation with other State Department offices and other Departments and agencies. As they worked to analyze and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own knowledge of U.S. Government programs and activities.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003 will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy and making assistance, training and other resource allocations. It will also serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's cooperation with private groups to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights and democracy.

Within the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the editorial staff of the Country Reports Team consists of: Editors in Chief - Cynthia R. Bunton and Robert P. Jackson; Senior Advisors - E. Michael Southwick and Elizabeth Dugan; Editors - Ralph D. Anske, Lena Auerbach, Judith R. Baroody, Jarrett Basedow, Sally I. Buikema, Deborah J. Cahalen, Stuart Crampton, Jeanette Davis, Patricia A. Davis, Julie Eadeh, Carol G. Finerty, Amy E. Gadsden, Solange Garvey, Jean M. Geran, Tatiana Gfoeller, Karen Gilbride, Sondra Govatski, Maya Graham, Thomas J. Grubisha, Patrick Harvey, Ann Marie Jackson, Yvonne Jackson, Jeffrey M. Jamison, Kari Johnstone, Christina Jun, Joanna Levison, Mia Kelley, Amy E. McKee, Ryan McMillan, Peter Mulrean, Peter Neisuler, Michael Orona, Susan O'Sullivan, Sarah Fox Ozkan, Donald E. Parker, Maria B. Pica, Jennifer M. Pekkinen, LeRoy G. Potts, Lisa Rende Taylor, Rebecca A. Schwalbach, Danielle B. Segall, Lynn M. Sicade, Wendy B. Silverman, Anne Sorensen, Cathy Stump, Ross Taggart, Vonzella Taylor, Danika Walters, and Sarah Yeomans; Graphic Design - Regina Cross; Printing - Bob Mahiques; Technical Support - Daniel Bowens.



INTRODUCTION

The advancement of human rights and democracy has many dimensions. There is certainly a long history of identifying those rights – as we have recognized them in our own political system and in actions the international community has taken through such instruments as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Creating international consensus on what constitutes fundamental rights was a major step forward, taken in the aftermath of the atrocities of World War II, although we discovered that in practice many governments failed to live up to their commitments, and in some cases, openly flouted international human rights standards.

In this kind of environment, monitoring human rights abuses and holding governments accountable for violations is another indispensable part of protecting human rights. For decades, non-governmental organizations have taken up the challenge of collecting comprehensive data and giving a voice to those whose testimony oppressive governments would silence. Since 1977, the State Department has published the annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, which enjoys a hard-won status as an accurate and objective portrayal of the human rights situation around the globe. It is an indispensable tool in our efforts to advocate for the victims of human rights abuses and to press upon foreign governments the need to take positive steps to build free, democratic and stable societies.

Over a quarter-century of reporting on human rights has helped shine a light on the worst abuses and kept pressure on oppressive governments. In the past 10-15 years, particularly with the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States has taken opportunities to extend human rights promotion beyond what is called the "name and shame" strategy. This has required us to look at the human rights reports as not merely a record of past performance, but a guide to areas and methods for future improvement. More recently, President Bush's U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) proposals have increased our reliance on human rights reporting for achieving objectives of democratic governance. And so more and more, we are using the annual *Country Reports* with these goals in mind, to help us and others involved in policymaking tailor assistance programs to achieve real and measurable impact.

Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003 identifies in a more systematic way, for Congress, the American public and audiences overseas, how the U.S. Government is integrating policy with reporting on human rights. Around the world, in every region, the United States is implementing programs, taking advantage of the information and understanding of global human rights that we have built up over the years by compiling the annual *Country Reports*. In this volume, we detail our efforts in 92 countries, taking care to include among them places of concern for "extrajudicial killings, torture, or other serious violations of human rights," as Congress called for in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003.

These reports have been produced by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, but would not have been possible without the contributions of regional and other functional bureaus of the Department of State and U.S. missions abroad, and those provided by the U.S. Departments of Justice and Labor and the U.S. Agency for International Development. In fact, the joint production of the report mirrors the collaborative nature of our efforts to defend and promote democracy worldwide.

The *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* have served as a catalog of the problems of human rights in countries worldwide, and we have striven to present that information with accuracy and integrity. In this inaugural edition of *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003*, we describe solutions, implemented by individuals and organizations whose vision looks toward a better world and whose courage inspires groundswells for change. The U.S. Government is proud to support their efforts.

Lorne W. Craner
Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy,
Human Rights and Labor

AFRICA

A decade ago single-party states and military dictatorships were the norm in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2003 Freedom House report, using its stringent criteria, lists 18 African countries as free. Many more countries have made significant strides toward free and fair elections, effective governance and respect for internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Some long-term civil wars have concluded or may be near resolution.

Nonetheless, democracy efforts and human rights in Africa face severe challenges. These result from continuing conflict in some countries and regions, weak institutions and leadership, disunity among racial, linguistic, religious, and tribal groups, corruption, and poor governance. The amazing change that has occurred in Kenya in recent months, however, underscores the thirst and the determination of all people for good government. The same can be said of the brave people of Zimbabwe, who struggle under the heel of a despotic regime.

"In our desire to be safe from brutal and bullying oppression, human beings are the same. In our desire to care for our children and give them a better life, we are the same. For these fundamental reasons, freedom and democracy will always and everywhere have greater appeal than the slogans of hatred and the tactics of terror."

President Bush
Speech at American Enterprise Institute
February 26, 2003

Many African leaders recognize the challenge; one promising initiative is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). To be effective, both NEPAD and the African Union must demonstrate their credibility by holding each participating state to high standards of democracy and human rights and imposing consequences for those African nations that fail to uphold them. Sub-regional bodies like the Southern African Development Community and Economic Community of West African States also have important roles to play.

The United States is buttressing African efforts through election support and corporate responsibility programs. We have focused on efforts to resolve conflicts, defuse religious tensions, and strengthen rule of law, free media, and civil society. We continue to seek ways to expand capacity building and to professionalize African militaries. The African Growth and Opportunity Act encourages reform efforts. The Millennium Challenge Account, President Bush's landmark initiative to produce new accountability and results in foreign aid, also stands to benefit Africa in an enormous way.

PROVIDING ANGOLANS WITH ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT RADIO

In Angola we are using the Human Rights and Democracy Fund to expand access to independent radio to 85% of the population by providing for the installation of studios and transmitters for Angola's only independent radio station, Radio Ecclesia. Radio Ecclesia is making a difference by informing its audience of what is happening in the country. Members of Angola's civil society have called the radio a key player to bringing democracy to the country. We expect the Radio to play an especially important role as Angola prepares for elections.

ANGOLA

Angola, with the exception of Cabinda province, is slowly emerging from 27 years of civil war. Corrupt and dysfunctional government institutions, limited access to independent information, and a weak civil society inhibit rapid progress toward genuine democracy and respect for human rights. Moreover, as Angola prepares for only its second national elections, the country lacks adequate procedures and capacity to ensure a free and fair electoral process. With the spread of HIV/AIDS and the large population movements following the war, provisions against discrimination and protection of education, housing, and land access rights are limited.

The U.S. has focused on building civil society's capacity to advocate human and constitutional rights, as a means of pressing the Government to address violations and limits on freedom. The Ambassador chairs a multi-agency Democracy Committee that develops and implements democracy and human rights promotion activities, in consultation with Angolan and international non-governmental organization (NGO) partners.

The Ambassador established the Democracy Small Grants program to provide flexible funding to grassroots NGOs. Through USAID and programs such as the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) small grants and the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund, the Embassy supported local NGOs in promoting human rights, including awareness of prisoner's rights, legal advocacy, and the establishment of a civil rights information center.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 the Embassy provided $200,000 to local groups to hold forums, town meetings, and seminars aimed at increasing public contributions to Angola's constitutional revision process. As part of this activity, 1,350 radio programs on constitutional and human rights were broadcast in Portuguese and in five local languages, reaching more than 1.3 million people.

Given the importance of free and fair elections in the development of accountability and the protection of human rights, the Embassy allocated $2.5 million of its Economic Support Funds (ESF) to support the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems in creating viable political and electoral structures. In FY 2002, these Consortium for Elections and Political Party Strengthening (CEPPS) partners published a comprehensive report outlining the tasks and schedule for establishing a legal framework for elections, initiating campaign and election monitor training, and promoting election transparency that would meet international standards. The report was well received by the Government, opposition political parties, and civil society as blueprint for achieving free and fair elections.

As elections approach, the U.S. is providing $300,000 for independent broadcaster Radio Ecclesia to expand its broadcasting capabilities to provinces outside Luanda in time for the next election cycle. Funds are being used to support the installation of up to 16 FM repeater stations that will expand Radio Ecclesia's ability to broadcast programs nationwide

and bring the FM signal to over 85 percent of the Angolan population. The broadcasts provide wider access to information related to human rights, civic education and good governance. Members of Angola's civil society have called Radio Ecclesia a key player in a bringing democracy to the country. The Embassy also provided $500,000 to Voice of America's Linha Directa service, which provides an important alternative source to the government-controlled radio broadcast news. The U.S. is also providing $300,000 to media outlets so they may purchase newsprint for independent weekly newspapers. The Public Diplomacy section of the Embassy assisted media through the international visitor program, U.S. speakers, and information dissemination.

In addition, the Embassy provided technical assistance, training, and grants to improve citizens' capacity to advocate effectively for children's right to education, rights to housing for internally displaced women, and rights to confidentiality and employment for people living with HIV/AIDS. Civil society coalitions organized 225 advocacy campaigns, seminars, and workshops that reached 104,000 people in FY 2002. Since the campaigns began, the Government adopted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Code on HIV/AIDS as a basis to protect the rights of workers living with AIDS, paid customs duties for 68 tons of primary school books that were held in port for over two years, and distributed land and building materials to 4,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Land tenure is a vital component of Angola's future stability as millions of ex-combatants, IDPs, and refugees return home. In FY 2002 the Embassy supported the work of a local civil society-based land tenure coalition to raise awareness and increase public input in the draft land tenure law. The coalition successfully pressured the Government to consult with NGOs and Angolans about the draft law and to extend the public comment period. Following a recent coalition-sponsored conference on the law, participants said the Government increasingly understands that it must work with others to develop an acceptable law.

BURKINA FASO

President Blaise Compaore and his party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress, continued to dominate the Government of the Fourth Republic despite gains made by the opposition in May 5, 2002, legislative elections, which were considered substantially free and fair by international election officials. In 1998 President Compaore was reelected to a second seven-year term. The Government's human rights record remained poor, and although the Government continued attempts to improve its human rights performance, it continued to commit abuses. The security forces were responsible for numerous extrajudicial killings and continued to abuse detainees; a general climate of impunity for members of the security forces continued to be a problem. During the year, there were credible reports that security forces summarily executed suspected criminals, and prison conditions remained harsh. Arbitrary arrest and detention were problems, and authorities

did not provide detainees with due process. Courts were subject to executive influence, and authorities did not ensure fair trials.

To address those human rights problems, the U.S. Government has used a combination of advocacy and program support to draw attention to international human rights norms, to emphasize accountability and transparency in government, and to nurture a large and active but underfinanced community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in the promotion of human rights and democracy.

The Embassy's pro-active application of diplomatic pressure on the Government, along with criticism and publicity campaigns by human rights associations, resulted in a sharp decline in the extrajudicial killings of criminal suspects by the country's police in 2002. To improve prison conditions in the country, the Mission used $10,000 in Democracy and Human Rights Funds (DHRF) and Public Diplomacy (PD) funds to sponsor a workshop raising awareness of the country's harsh prison conditions. Following that workshop, the country's minister of justice committed himself to addressing this problem through a number of initiatives. To aid the administration of justice, the Mission used a $3,000 DHRF grant to help equip a number of local tribunals in the interior of the country with photocopiers and typewriters.

To foster freedom of the press, Embassy-funded programs over the past several years have involved the training of journalists in investigative reporting and coverage of political campaigns and elections. In addition, the Mission used a $3,500 DHRF grant to sponsor awards for journalists who have published articles involving investigative journalism.

Focusing on democracy promotion through electoral reform, Embassy programs have brought together political parties to foster consideration of necessary electoral reforms and the financing of the National Independent Electoral Commission. To support political reform, the Ambassador met with opposition parties to encourage them to fully participate in the ongoing political reform process and to cease their ongoing election boycotts. Those efforts paid off handsomely during the 2002 legislative elections. Both international and national observers stated that the elections were free and fair, with no serious fraud or harassment reported. In addition, all opposition parties participated in the 2002 legislative elections and quadrupled their representation, taking 49 percent of the seats. For the first time since multiparty politics were restored in 1992, the country has a genuinely pluralist legislature.

To educate citizens on human rights and bolster civil society, the Embassy used the DHRF and PD grant funds to produce radio programs on human rights, democracy and the electoral process. It supported local associations that promote human rights, the development of the judicial system, and the rights of women. The Embassy also funded programs focusing on the rights of handicapped persons. In 2002, as part of the International Visitor Program, the Embassy sent to the U.S. for training a number of professionals in the areas of democracy, good governance, conflict resolution, HIV/AIDS, civic edu-

cation, and journalism. A number of military and civilian persons have attended programs sponsored by the African Center for Strategic Studies, permitting them to gain insight into the workings of the military in a democratic society.

Through DHRF funding, the Embassy sponsored programs on female genital mutilation, forced marriage, women's and children's rights, the rights of persons with HIV/AIDS, and the problem of social exclusion. In addition to sponsoring these events with program funding, the Ambassador and Embassy personnel have supported the events with their active participation.

To promote religious freedom, the Embassy has sponsored a number of workshops and discussions exploring different religions and the importance of tolerance. The Mission also sent three participants on an International Visitor Program about Islam in a democracy, and participants reported that the visit positively influenced their attitudes. The Mission also regularly meets with the country's Muslim community for discussions and exchanges.

Through Department of Labor funds, the International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor and the country's anti-trafficking in children project (IPEC/LUTRENA) funded a workshop on drafting anti-child trafficking legislation in late 2002. The National Assembly is expected to pass the law by mid-2003.

BURUNDI

The Government of Burundi's human rights record remained poor in 2002 and early 2003, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses. Security forces continued to commit numerous arbitrary and unlawful killings with impunity. The armed forces killed armed rebels and unarmed civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. The security forces continued to torture, beat, rape, and otherwise abuse persons. Despite some improvements, prison conditions remained very poor in general and sometimes life threatening.

To end the cycle of violence and human rights abuses that gripped the country for more than a decade, the Embassy promoted the Burundian peace process begun in 1997 by regional leaders. From negotiation through ratification to implementation, the Embassy publicly and privately supported the Arusha peace accord. In addition, throughout the implementation process, the Embassy called for non-signatory Arusha combatants to immediately adopt a cease-fire and begin peace negotiations without preconditions. The largest Burundian rebel group, the CNDD-FDD, signed a cease-fire; but another rebel group, the Palipehutu-FNL, still has not.

Notwithstanding the July 2001 agreement to begin a three-year transition period on November 1, 2001, civil war has continued to plague the country. Under the agreement and the October 2001 Transition Constitution, President Pierre Buyoya served as transition president for 18 months, and Domitien Ndayizeye, the secretary general of the

predominantly ethnic Hutu opposition party FRODEBU, was sworn in on April 30, 2003, and will serve 18 months as president.

The Embassy has worked to improve respect for the freedom of movement within the country and other human rights of internally displaced persons. In May of 2002, when the Burundian Army forced civilians in Ruyigi Province to live in temporary camps, away from their homes and livelihoods, in order to expose and combat rebel infiltrations of the civilian population, the Embassy expressed its concern to the Minister of Reinstallation, Reintegration, and Repatriation. Six weeks after the Embassy's protest, the Government ended the forced relocation of civilians in Ruyigi.

In September 2002, after receiving reports stating that the army massacred over 178 civilians at Itaba, the Embassy publicly condemned the massacre. In addition, the Ambassador visited Itaba and delivered demarches to the most senior members of the Government. Two officers and one non-commissioned officer were eventually arrested in connection with the Itaba massacre.

To help build capacity and expertise in the areas of conflict resolution, judicial reform and prison reform, the Embassy has sent Burundians to conferences using the International Visitors Program. For Example, Eric Shima, President of the Center for Conflict Resolution, a Burundian non-governmental organization (NGO), attended a Young African Leadership Program conference on conflict resolution, and Deo Suzuguye, Director General of the Burundian Prison System, attended a law and prison reform program in Rwanda.

USAID programs in 2002 and 2003 promoted non-violent conflict resolution, the rule of law, prison reform and media broadcasting that encouraged peace and reconciliation among members of different ethnic groups. In addition, USAID programs have raised citizens' awareness of their legal and human rights, promoted the Arusha peace process and the importance of ethnic reconciliation, and deepened the advocacy role of the country's civil society in public issues.

To heighten citizens' awareness of and involvement in the justice system, the International Human Rights Law Group (HRLG) used $124,000 worth of USAID grants to conduct legal seminars with local associations and private radio stations. The seminars solicited input on pending legislation regarding issues such

PHOTO:IFES

as political parties, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, criminal courts, and provisional immunity. HRLG has also conducted legal clinics for citizens in the provinces to help them understand their legal rights and responsibilities within the country's justice system.

Through a $1.17 million USAID grant implemented by Search for Common Ground (SFCG), Studio Ijambo has produced programs for use on private radio stations and the state media on the meaning of the Arusha peace process to citizens and on such themes as human rights and ethnic reconciliation. Plays and soap operas conveyed these messages powerfully, and special programs have been aimed at ex-combatants, child soldiers and victims and perpetrators of violence. About 90 percent of Studio Ijambo's programs are in local languages. Furthermore, Radio Isanganiro used USAID funding to broadcast 15 hours of programs a day nationally and regionally, reaching audiences in Bukavu, Kigali and western Tanzania in three local languages.

To prevent violence against women and children and promote civil society, the Women's Peace Center (WPC) used a $724,000 USAID grant to support over 300 local women's organizations in three provinces and the capital city. The WPC fostered inter-communal and inter-ethnic dialogue and developed assistance mechanisms for female victims of war and violence. The WPC offered these groups training in conflict-resolution skills, post-crisis trauma healing and advocacy on behalf of women. As a result, a total of 2,234 women are now trained as peacemakers in their communities; 34 women have been trained as trauma counselors, and 347 citizens have participated in workshops on violence against women and children. This support helped advance the creation of a network of women's associations that will become nationwide once peace comes to the entire country.

To promote worker rights, the U.S. Department of Labor helped fund a two-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities.

CAMEROON

The United States funded several major human rights and democracy projects in 2002 and early 2003 including film screenings on the importance of free and fair elections, book discussions on participation in public decisions, the printing of election observation materials and the shooting of documentaries promoting women's rights. The national television station, CRTV, has broadcast the documentaries, which have also been made available to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that deal with gender issues.

The U.S. regularly engaged the Presidency and National Assembly on how to improve Cameroon's democracy. These interventions, along with the public diplomacy efforts cited above, have decreased Cameroon's human rights violations. The Embassy has continued to engage the host government and use pub-

lic diplomacy funds through such series as the International Visitor Program (IVP) to insist that the government fight corruption and effect respect for and promotion of rule of law and good governance.

In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the Defense Attache Office worked closely with the Ministry of Defense to vet military units for U.S. training and checked candidates with other embassy offices.

Embassy staff monitored June 2002 municipal and legislative elections throughout the country, contributing to what has been touted as one of the freest and fairest elections in Cameroon's history. Embassy staff met with opposition parties, regional officials and National Election Observatory (NEO) representatives within Cameroon's ten provinces. In their capacity as election observers, Embassy staff visited polling stations, surveyed election procedures and conversed with both the local officials and voting populace. The Embassy compiled its observations and proffered recommendations directly to the Presidency.

The U.S. used public diplomacy funds to administer election observation workshops for journalists, political parties, civil society and local observers. Workshop topics included free and fair election strategies, monitoring rules and techniques, election reporting and citizen participation. On Election Day, the Embassy set up a center for electoral data collection. Post provided journalists with calling cards in a program dubbed, "Operation Cell Phones for Democracy." Participants throughout the election training said the workshops and resource center significantly contributed toward detecting and containing election fraud.

To promote U.S. efforts to contain radical Islam, the U.S. involved young Muslim leaders in the IVP that provided training in religious freedom, democracy and human rights. The Embassy also held meetings with various Muslim leaders in the community to offer guidance where possible and ensure an understanding of their perspective.

An innovative public awareness campaign using a nationally famous soccer star during the African Nations Soccer Cup final showed the sportsman handing out a "Red Card" to employers of children.

Due in part to deliberations with the U.S., the Government of Cameroon has begun to channel more resources toward the amelioration of trafficking in persons. Working with International Labor Organization, the U.S. has put forward an ambitious four-part plan to encourage legislation, train enforcement personnel, educate parents, and assist victims. Cameroon also benefits from a U.S.-sponsored project to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in commercial agriculture, especially cocoa production.

PHOTO: IFES

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Until a March 15, 2003, seizure of power, the Central African Republic (C.A.R.) was a constitutional democracy with a multiparty legislature. General Francois Bozize, who took over the presidency, ousted President Ange-Felix Patasse, dissolved the National Assembly, and suspended the constitution. General Bozize also established a 63-member National Transitional Council on March 31 to serve as an advisory and transitional law-making organ, which he said was intended to reestablish the rule of law, assist the presidency in drafting a new constitution, and prepare the country for general elections.

The seizure of power replaced a government whose human rights record, some limited improvements aside, remained poor in 2002 and early 2003. Security forces continued to commit arbitrary and unlawful killings, and police continued to torture, beat, and otherwise abuse suspects and prisoners. Other human rights abuses included harsh prison conditions, arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention without trial, and limits on judicial independence.

The Embassy, which has been forced to suspend operations since November 2002, funded several programs to educate government officials and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) about human rights, promote the rule of law, and defend freedom of the press; it also highlighted human rights abuses and queried government officials about individuals in detention. To help advance this agenda, the Ambassador engaged government officials directly at the highest levels to discuss human rights issues and abuses that required further attention.

During and following an October 25, 2002, attempted coup d'etat, the Embassy strenuously protested the widespread human rights abuses committed by Congolese rebel MLC soldiers brought into the country to support President Patasse's government.

The professionalism and respect for the integrity of the person among the country's armed forces (FACA) has great bearing upon the status of human rights in the country, given the military's history of mutinies and coup attempts. In April 2002, the Embassy sent four defense officials, including the Minister of Defense, to an African Center for Strategic Studies seminar in Washington; the seminar incorporated human rights issues in its training. The Embassy also made a significant contribution toward improving the conduct and professionalism of the

FACA by sending five FACA officers for human rights training in the United States through International Military Education and Training (IMET).

To educate legislators and opinion leaders about torture as a human rights abuse, the Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to fund an NGO seminar. Over 120 National Assembly deputies, magistrates, government officials, and civil society members were invited. In July 2002, the National Assembly ratified the UN Convention against Torture. In addition, the Mission held discussions with the Minister of Justice concerning prison conditions and human rights abuses committed by government security forces.

To promote the rule of law, the Embassy worked with civil society groups, the Government, and NGOs to strengthen the legal system in the country. Through the DHRF, the Embassy funded a law library at the Cassation Court, providing money for the purchase of legal texts and references, subscriptions to periodicals, computers, and furniture. This law library, the only one in the country, will serve as a resource for the entire legal community in the country.

To promote freedom of the press, the Embassy has built a strong consultative relationship with the C.A.R. Journalists Association. During 2002, the Ambassador visited its offices for consultations and donated books to the Association's library.

Under the International Visitor Program, the Embassy sent a National Assembly deputy to a month-long program on conflict resolution, and a law professor from the University of Bangui to a program on the rule of law. The Embassy also hosted two speakers on anti-corruption and the rule of law.

In efforts to strengthen civil society, the Embassy engaged in a wide-ranging dialogue with various civil society organizations including the Journalists' Association, the Women's Legal Association, and the principal labor unions. Topics of particular interest were press freedom, the participation of women in the political process, and the issue of salary arrears owed to government workers.

CHAD

President Idriss Deby has ruled Chad since taking power in a 1990 rebellion. He was reelected President in May 2001; however, fraud, widespread vote rigging, and local irregularities marred the 2001 presidential election and the April legislative elections.

The Government's human rights record remained poor, and it committed serious human rights abuses. Security forces committed extrajudicial killings, abductions, and continued to torture, beat, rape, and abuse persons. The judiciary remained subject to executive interference. Violence and societal discrimination against women were common, and female genital mutilation (FGM) was widespread.

PHOTO: Sally Buikema

To strengthen respect by the military for the integrity of the person, the U.S. Government continued to fund programs aimed at professionalizing the military and making it more responsive to command and control procedures through the training of eight Chadian officers under the Department of Defense training programs, such as the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs at U.S. military facilities, where basic notions of human rights are incorporated into the courses. All training candidates were vetted through the Embassy's screening system to ensure compliance with the Leahy Amendment.

There are six active human rights associations that the U.S. Government supported intermittently since the early 1990s with small grants from the Bureau of African Affairs' Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF). During 2002, one of these local human rights associations established, with a $23,000 DHRF grant, six legal clinics in the capital where legal counsel and assistance are provided to individuals who ordinarily would not have access to the country's formal judicial system. The clinics continue to provide this service without continued U.S. assistance.

Recognizing the importance of a free and vigorous press, the Embassy used its International Visitor Program to send a reporter from one of the more critical opposition newspapers to the U.S. for training in investigative journalism. The Public Diplomacy section also provided a small grant to a private radio station.

Since the promotion of human rights and civil liberties begins during citizens' formative years, the Embassy used a DHRF grant to fund a pilot project in six schools to test the suitability of a previously-developed civics education course outline for grades 1-12. In addition, the Education for Democracy and Development Initiative helped 3,363 girls and women gain access to primary, secondary and technical schools.

The U.S. Government also promoted human rights through its support for the development of certain legislation, particularly that which would improve the protection of women's rights and those of rural Chadians, who constitute 80 percent of the population.

The U.S. funded a local non-governmental organization's efforts that resulted in the drafting and enactment in April 2002 of legislation criminalizing FGM. Also included in this $25,000 DHRF grant were an education component to change local attitudes toward FGM and a survey of its prevalence in two high-risk zones.

Another piece of legislation that would protect individual rights and that aimed to reduce inter-ethnic violence was drafted and debated with funds from a DHRF grant. If enacted, the law would govern the movement of nomadic herds, while defining rights and responsibilities of both nomadic and sedentary populations whose lives and property are impacted by these annual migrations. An effort is underway by the Embassy, working with key ministers and the National Mediator, to achieve consensus on the contentious provisions so that Parliament will pass the legislation.

The National Mediator's Office has not only taken the lead in getting the nomad legislation drafted and debated but has also played an important role in mediating other conflicts in Chad. This office benefited in 2002 from the training of one of its staff members through the International Visitor Program. The public diplomacy program also supported two guest speaker programs that featured an American specialist in conflict prevention and mediation.

To foster good economic governance during 2002, the Embassy secured the services of a technical advisor from the U.S. Department of Treasury who worked with the country's Finance Ministry and the Oil Revenue Management College in developing a set of procedures designed to ensure oil- revenue allocation to Chad's four priority development sectors. This technical oversight will continue into 2003 when oil revenues come on line.

In efforts to strengthen civil society and thus counterbalance the power of the country's executive branch, the Embassy helped 12 community-based development groups as they exercised the recently-discovered power that has stemmed from a de facto decentralization of decision-making in rural areas.

THE UNION OF COMOROS

The Union of Comoros is an emerging democracy that was ruled by President Azali Assoumani, who took power in a coup in April 1999, and subsequently was elected democratically in April presidential elections described by international observers as free and fair. The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were problems in some areas. Prison conditions remained poor. Security forces and the separatist authorities on Anjouan used arbitrary arrest and detention. The Government limited freedom of religion, and security forces reportedly continued to threaten Christians. Societal discrimination against women and Christians continued to be serious problems. There were some instances of forced child labor.

The United States relied on a combination of modest financial assistance and vigorous diplomacy to achieve its human rights objectives in the Comoros, which remained subject to U.S. sanctions. The Embassy's efforts have focused on assisting attempts to develop a stable government. Accordingly, the Embassy in Port Louis, Mauritius, although lacking in substantive financial tools, mounted an aggressive campaign to send Mission personnel on a monthly basis to the country to work directly with the Government and to encourage stability and the development of a democratic framework. The Ambassador has discussed professionalization of security forces and division of responsibilities between the internal and external security forces at the highest levels of the national and regional governments. In addition, the Embassy has worked in close cooperation with government representatives and neighboring Embassies to help stabilize the country through technical assistance in immigration techniques, customs practices and drug interdiction efforts.

PHOTO: IFES

In 2002, the Embassy administered Self-Help and Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) projects totaling $33,100. Through DHRF, and in partnership with a local NGO, the Embassy organized a highly interactive and informative three-day seminar on the rights of women. The success of the three-day event was manifest evidence of both the hunger for information on human rights issues in the country, as well as the future role the U.S. Government can play in educating the population. In addition, the Embassy funded a Self-Help project to prevent gender discrimination.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remained divided into territory controlled by the Government and territories controlled by several rebel factions, foreign troops, ethnic militias, and other armed groups. President Joseph Kabila, who came to power in January 2001 after the assassination of his father Laurent Desire Kabila, ruled by decree in the territory under government control.
The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were improvements in some areas, serious problems remained. The security forces were responsible for unlawful killings, torture, beatings, rape, extortion, and the arbitrary arrest and detention of citizens. Prison conditions in hundreds of small or regional detention facilities remained harsh and life threatening, and the judiciary continued to be underfunded, inefficient, and corrupt.

The Ambassador worked with the Ambassadors from other UN Security Council Permanent Member (P-5) countries, Belgium, and South Africa to keep constant pressure on the Government and the rebel factions to make peace. The Ambassadors intervened on numerous occasions to ensure that the Congolese parties attended meetings, negotiated seriously, and avoided actions that could have derailed the peace process. On December 17, 2002, in Pretoria, the parties signed a Global and Inclusive Accord for the Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. If implemented, the accord will establish a national transitional government that will prepare for elections within two years.

The Ambassador and Embassy personnel approached President Kabila and leaders of rebel movements to seek the release of people arrested on political grounds. Embassy staff also intervened with rebel groups on behalf of international human rights organizations to obtain permission to travel for or end harassment of their personnel.

The Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) played an important role in the march toward the Global Accord in 2002. USAID funded programs in the amount of $1 million implemented by the International Human Rights Law Group (IHRLG), the International Foundation for Election Systems, Development Alternatives, Inc., and the National Democratic Institute to prepare civil society and political parties to play a positive role in the ICD. Accordingly, this program enabled participants from civil society to draft a proposed post-transition constitution for consideration by the Senate and to draft laws on nationality, federalism, the protection of human rights, and presidential authority. This program also supported efforts by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to organize a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Human Rights Commission called for in the Global Accord.

IHRLG implemented USAID's Access to Justice program, with a 2002 budget of $250,000, and provided training for defense attorneys, funded a local human rights institute, and helped attorneys develop briefs on human rights violations. Attorneys working under this program met prison detainees to ensure that they were not being held illegally and to give

them access to a lawyer. At the end of June 2002, these attorneys had met with 1,279 detainees, of whom 237 were released and 172 had court hearings.

The human rights program funded by USAID in the amount of $100,000 had two additional components. USAID continued to fund IHRLG to train and support local organizations that have human rights programs designed to end sexual violence against women and protect the rights of indigenous people and children. This component built local capacity by educating NGOs about human rights, teaching them strategies to address human rights problems and training them to identify donors to fund their work. In addition, USAID granted $500,000 to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for a program to counsel and deal with the consequences of rape in North and South Kivu.

To promote worker rights, the U.S. Department of Labor helped fund a two-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities.

Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) projects implemented during 2002 were funded at a level of $80,000 and included consciousness-raising campaigns on non-violence, human rights, the culture of peace in multi-ethnic societies and in wartime, and conflict resolution. With DHRF funding, several NGOs carried out the campaigns via radio interviews and discussions, workshops, and seminars. One project in Kindu trained human rights activists and produced plays, radio broadcasts, and video ses-

PHOTO:IFES

sions on conflict resolution and civic responsibilities. A human rights organization in Kikwit used its DHRF grant to produce a primary school textbook on human rights and is training teachers to use the 1,000 text that will be distributed. Another organization conducted a workshop on the country's penitentiary system and international documents ratified by the Government on detainee rights. The workshop produced a pamphlet on detainee rights, 2,000 copies of which the organization has distributed to detainees and correction officials in prisons and commune lockups.

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives funded programs in the amount of $90,000 through Radio Okapi, the country's only nationwide radio station, urging members of militias and others to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate into society.

The Embassy gave public diplomacy funds in the amount of $70,000 to local human rights organizations (Voice for the Voiceless, Journalists in Danger, Info Plus, and Committee for Democracy and Human Rights) to support their workshops and conferences on human rights abuses.

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The Republic of the Congo is ruled by a government in which most of the power is vested directly in the President. Denis Sassou-Nguesso was elected President in March 2002, and in May and June legislative elections were held for the Senate and the House of Delegates in most jurisdictions. Both the presidential and legislative elections were determined to be generally free and fair.

The Government's human rights record remained poor in 2002 and early 2003, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Security forces were responsible for extrajudicial killings, summary executions, rapes, beatings, physical abuse of detainees and citizens, arbitrary arrest and detention, and theft. Prison conditions were poor, and the judiciary was unable to ensure fair and expeditious trials. Rebel militias also committed serious human rights abuses, and actions by both the army and the rebel militias have caused the flow of approximately 65,000 internally displaced persons from the Pool region.

From promoting respect for the rights of indigenous people to improving civil-military relations, human rights were a subset of almost every contact the U.S. Mission had with the Government.

Through dialogue and seminars sponsored by the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Government encouraged greater military discipline, professionalism, and respect for human rights. As a result, a high commission has been established for the re-insertion of former rebel militia members into the military and

society and President Sassou's announcement that former militia would receive amnesty if they laid down their arms. In addition, the Embassy recently launched an English-language training program intended to facilitate other types of training.

To foster better civil-military relations, the U.S. Government funded a seminar on disaster management in which military personnel and representatives from non-governmental organizations discussed issues of importance concerning disaster management and civil-military cooperation.

In order to build general awareness of human rights among the population, the Embassy focused its efforts on youth, women, and minorities. Since 2000, the Embassy has used the Democracy and Human Rights Funds to educate women and girls about their rights under international conventions. In addition, the Mission provided a variety of materials such as pamphlets to assist teachers and local NGOs in teaching lessons on human rights, the participation of women in a nascent democracy, the right to vote, the legal rights of women and children in marriage inheritance. The Embassy also provided educational materials to assist with the basic human rights training and education of the country's indigenous minority.

The training funds have amounted to approximately $150,000 over three years and have been invested in the development of local human rights groups, some of which have reconnected with international human rights organizations. Results from these investments include the formation of additional human rights groups and a greater awareness of and respect for human rights among the general population.

To promote worker rights, the U.S. Department of Labor helped fund a two-year regional initiative by the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor with the goal of demobilizing and rehabilitating child soldiers and reintegrating them into their former communities.

To promote good governance, the Mission used demarches, workshops, and a public diplomacy conference to stress the need for the Government to increase transparency in accounting for oil revenues and other funds. As a result, President Sassou stressed in August that transparency efforts would be given high priority in his administration and established a state organ to fight corruption.

COTE D'IVOIRE

The stability of Cote d'Ivoire has deteriorated since the death of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny in 1993. The Ivoirian political leadership has been unable to transition effectively to democratic processes or to manage ethnic and regional differences. Issues of citizenship, eligibility to hold office, and land ownership have been manipulated to favor core southern ethnic groups to the disadvantage of largely Muslim and animist northerners and foreigners, who make up over 25 percent of the population. This has aggravated perceptions of difference and disadvantage.

Prior to the September 19, 2002, coup attempt that divided the country between north and south, the U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused on national reconciliation, election assistance, strengthening civil society, promoting women's and children's human rights, and combating child labor. Since then, the U.S. and the international community have focused on restoring peace and demanding accountability for human rights abuses by the Government, its supporters, and rebels. The U.S. has devoted significant resources to issues identified in the 2001 National Reconciliation Forum.

The U.S. endorses the January 2003 Linas-Marcoussis peace agreement and has supported its implementation. We have urged the Government in the strongest terms to take steps to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights abuses and have insisted on measures to prevent a climate of impunity for human rights abuses in Cote d'Ivoire. Since the signing of accord, the United States has pushed the Government and all political parties to implement the accord that entails significant power sharing by the presidency. Ambassador Render is a key member (representing the G-8 countries) of the UN Monitoring Committee for the Marcoussis accord and regularly pushes President Gbagbo, rebel New Forces leaders, and other Ivoirian leaders to complete the all-parties government, share presidential powers more broadly, and take the many steps necessary to prepare for elections scheduled for 2005.

To enhance conflict prevention capabilities and to identify potential areas of collaboration, the Embassy's Public Affairs Section (PAS) is leading weekly meetings with a working group of Ministry of National Reconciliation officials and political party members in preparation for a five-day workshop on "Compromise and Consensus Building For Sustainable Political Stability."

The promotion of respect for human rights and democratization in Cote d'Ivoire remains a top mission goal. Our objective is to help Cote d'Ivoire consolidate a democratic multiparty system in which all Ivoirians have a voice and which is characterized by good governance, respect for fundamental human rights, an independent judiciary, and a strong civil society. Most non-humanitarian bilateral assistance to Cote d'Ivoire has, however, been suspended since the fundamentally flawed 2000 presidential election. The U.S. has supported the efforts of the United Nations, France, and the Economic Community of West African States to maintain peace and to get national reconciliation efforts back on track.

The U.S. continues to work with the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to facilitate democracy-building programs. In July 2002, the Mission used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to support observers for the Departmental Elections in 14 key areas around the country. The funds went to a consortium of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The Mission continues to use Economic Support Funds, DHRF, and the International Visitors Program to

strengthen democracy and human rights. In 2002 and 2003, the Mission sent Ivoirians to programs on "Administration of Courts," "Good Governance and the Private Sector," "International Security Issues," "Grassroots Democracy," and "Trafficking in Women and Children." In March 2003, PAS sponsored the performance of a play titled "The Hope of the People: The Life and Death of Martin Luther King, Jr." The play proved an effective means of promoting the ideals of democracy, social justice and non-violence. Also in March, PAS organized a conference for 150 high school students titled: "Civic Education: The Role and Responsibility of Youth in Peace." The conference emphasized that civic education is the essential foundation for a sustainable democracy, while providing a forum for the students to learn more about their country's laws. DHRF grants supported an NGO law education program in Abidjan's politically volatile working-class Port Bouet section and purchased much needed office equipment for another NGO promoting the rule of law and legal education for citizens. The Embassy aided a women's NGO in reopening a shelter for battered women. The Mission also supported the national Junior Chamber of Commerce's anti-corruption campaign with a DHRF grant.

Cote d'Ivoire is a destination country for trafficked children. The United States Department of Labor has made a three-year grant to the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor totaling $6,000,000 to strengthen the capacity of public and private agencies to:

- take actions to combat child labor;
- increase awareness and social mobilization on related issues;
- integrate labor inspection with child labor monitoring; and
- design a child labor in agriculture database to be maintained at the national and sub-regional levels.

In May 2003, PAS held a successful Interactive Dialogue with a live television hookup from the U.S. on trafficking in persons.

DJIBOUTI

Djibouti is a republic with a strong presidency and a weak but evolving legislature. The ruling People's Rally for Progress (RPP), which has been in power since independence in 1977, continued to control the political system and to suppress organized opposition. However, the country held its first multi-party legislative elections ever in 2003, the first legislative elections to be held since 1997. The judiciary was not independent of the executive and did not provide citizens' due process. Women generally have been excluded from senior positions in government and in the political parties even though they legally were entitled to participate in the political process, and no women served in the legislature.

In 2002 the Embassy focused on providing support and training for key decision-makers and for Djibouti's first-ever multi-party legislative election in early 2003. The U.S. provided $500,000 in Economic Support Funds (ESF) in support of the election. In addition, the Embassy funded three related projects from its Democracy and Human Rights Fund.

Using ESF funds, the Embassy worked with the Ministry of the Interior to ensure a smooth, relatively transparent election. The U.S. funded the purchase of ballots, ballot boxes, computers to tabulate results, an intranet within the ministry, and vehicles to transport materials. While independent election observers commented that actual balloting proceeded efficiently, the election was marred by opposition party claims of voting irregularities. The Embassy also organized a well received single country International Visitors Program for the members of the newly-created Independent National Election Commission and sent two opposition leaders on other International Visitors Programs to the U.S.

Despite 2002 legislation mandating 10 percent female representation in Parliament, the number of highly educated, politically informed women in Djibouti is very low. In an effort to support the new legislation, the Embassy collaborated with the Ministry for the Promotion of the Rights of Women in an educational campaign to inform women voters of the legislative changes. Additionally, the assistance supported a conference to target key women leaders who might run for election and educate them on the role of a legislator.

The Embassy also partnered with the Djiboutian League of Human Rights to sponsor a seminar for members of various local political parties. The seminar concentrated on the Constitution and its role in ensuring universal human rights, including the role of the judiciary, in elections. In an indication of increased public awareness of the constitutional system, opposition parties who disputed the legislative election results took their complaints to the courts rather than to the streets.

The Ministry of Justice and the newly created government commission on Human Rights participated in a program funded by Embassy Democracy and Human Rights Fund that encouraged thorough examination of the Penal Code. As a result, the commission called for the adoption of several international conventions on Human Rights.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Equatorial Guinea nominally is a multiparty constitutional republic; however, in practice President Teodoro Obiang Nguema and the small Mongomo subclan of the majority Fang tribe, which has ruled since the country's independence in 1968, dominate the Government. President Obiang, who has ruled since seizing power in a military coup d'etat in 1979, was re-elected in a December 2002 election marred by extensive fraud and intimidation.

The Government's human rights record remained poor in several areas: security forces committed numerous abuses, including torture, beating, and other physical abuse of prisoners and suspects, which at times resulted in deaths. They also used arbitrary arrest, detention, and incommunicado detention. The judicial system repeatedly failed to ensure due process and remained subject to executive pressures. The Government severely restricted freedom of speech and of the press; however, freedom of speech

improved marginally during the year. There were no effective domestic human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Efforts to promote human rights and reinforce democratic development in Equatorial Guinea were complicated by the fact that there was no U.S. Embassy located in the country in 2002. However, the U.S. Mission in Cameroon, which is responsible for all U.S. Government representation, promoted respect for human rights and reinforced the democratic development process in 2002 and early 2003 by engaging the Government, opposition groups, and NGOs at a number of levels. The Embassy held top-level ministerial discussions focused on promoting the respect for human rights, monitored the 2002 elections, aided the development of civil society, and has encouraged U.S. companies' cooperative involvement in development projects.

To foster improvements in the judicial system, the Mission regularly engaged the President and the Ministry of Justice and Religion in an open, frank, and ongoing dialogue on respect for justice and human rights. The Ambassador raised concerns with the President and high-level ministers over fair trial practices and continued to condemn torture and harsh prison sentences. With Embassy persuasion, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was admitted into the country for the first time in years to conduct prison inspections. This exercise has allowed the ICRC and the Government to identify problems and solutions in partnership. In addition, the Embassy used the International Visitors Program to host noted speaker Professor Edward Errante of the University of Paris II, who spoke to citizens in Malabo in September about the rule of law and combating corruption.

PHOTO:JEFS

To promote respect for political rights, the Ambassador raised concerns with the President and high-level ministers over election transparency and governance and used public diplomacy funds to administer workshops on the conduct of free and fair elections, with an emphasis on the role of civil society, political parties and local election observers.

Embassy officers traveled extensively throughout the country to observe the degree of transparency of the December 2002 presidential electoral campaign and election. Prior to the election, the Mission engaged both local and national governments to express our expectation of a clean election, which we believe added to the efficiency of its conduct. Embassy personnel visited polling stations, surveyed election procedures and conversed with local officials and the voting populace. Although the election suffered from irregularities, the opposition was allowed to campaign, voters were registered, and ballot materials reached their destinations.

During the election, the Embassy held meetings with opposition parties, regional officials, election observers from the African Union and the International Organization of the Francophonie, and members of the press. The Embassy compiled its observations and proffered recommendations on the conduct of future elections directly to the President.

In 2002, the Mission continued efforts to actively encourage effective and transparent management of the country's oil wealth for social and economic development. Accordingly, the Embassy has stressed the necessity of budgetary reforms.

Finally, in order to promote respect for human rights and democracy more vigorously, the Embassy received Congressional approval for the opening of a diplomatic mission in Equatorial Guinea in 2002. Assuming all logistical preparations can be expeditiously completed, in-country operations will commence in 2003.

ERITREA

Progress in Eritrea towards democracy suffered a serious setback in 2001 when the Government arrested prominent persons who voiced opposition to government policy, shut down the nascent free press, and postponed national elections indefinitely. In October 2001, two Foreign Service National (FSN) employees of the Embassy were also arrested and are still being held without charge. In the past year, the Government has also barred so-called non-traditional religious denominations from holding services. The constitution has not been implemented and the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice is the only legal political party.

The U.S. maintained an active dialogue with Eritrea on human rights and democracy. The Embassy's engagement aimed at encouraging a return to the path of democratization, implementation of the constitution, a genuinely free press, true religious freedom, a multi-party political system, and free elections. The Embassy has made clear to the Government that

increased cooperation with the U.S. depends on demonstrated improvement with respect to democracy and human rights.

To build support for democratic reform and human rights among opinion leaders, the Embassy held regular functions for alumni of USG exchange programs to facilitate interactions among these influential Eritreans. The Embassy also promoted discussions of democracy and its principles through speaking engagements featuring Embassy staff, the U.S. Speakers Program, information outreach, the "Africa Journal," the International Visitors and Voluntary Visitors Programs, and direct contacts with government officials. Embassy staff also conducted informational outreach to promote U.S. policies and values, introduce Eritreans to the U.S. experience of democratic governance, foster familiarity with American culture, and enhance mutual understanding between the countries.

Embassy staff also promoted increased use of the Information Resource Center at the Embassy as a source of information about U.S. policies, values, and culture. The Embassy established the first of several planned "American Corners" in partnership with local libraries and conducted information outreach to libraries and educational institutions.

One of the Embassy's goals is to provide greater access to information throughout the country to promote democracy and appreciation of human rights. In the absence of a free, independent press, the Internet has become one of the few means for a small but growing number of Eritreans to have access to independent views and information. USAID, which was instrumental in bringing the Internet to Eritrea, the last country in Africa to have it, administers a $500,000 program to provide technical assistance to expand the availability of cheap, efficient, reliable Internet access. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section conducted Internet training classes to support these efforts.

Embassy staff worked to strengthen civil society by supporting activities that devolve political power and economic resources by providing resources and expertise to promote the development of community-based organizations. USAID provided $370,000 in funding to create community-based savings and credit associations that helped mostly women rebuild or start businesses after the war with Ethiopia. Citizen participation was expanded by three USG-funded NGOs that have started humanitarian assistance and community development programs that extended opportunities for grassroots participation by working with parent-teacher associations, water associations, and local health committees.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia continued its transition from a unitary to a federal system of government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Highly centralized authority, poverty, civil conflict, and unfamiliarity with democratic concepts combined to complicate the implementation of federalism. The weak, overburdened judiciary continued to show signs of independence. Numerous internally displaced persons (IDPs) from internal ethnic conflicts remained in temporary quarters. Violence and societal discrimination against women remained problems.

The U.S. collaborated closely with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government officials to advance human rights. The Embassy demarched the Government on several occasions about its obligations under the Geneva Conventions to release all remaining Eritrean prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian internees from the Ethiopia-Eritrea war. Following these demarches, along with those of other western embassies, the Ethiopian Government released all remaining POWs and internees in November 2002.

The Embassy promoted the rule of law through a USAID funded judicial training program conducted by the Federal Supreme Court, in which 1,344 judges received training, of whom 90 were women. A total of 71 percent of Federal High Court and Supreme Court judges and 73 percent of district-level judges have completed this training. Eighty-two percent of judges in Ethiopia have now been trained through USAID-sponsored programs. USAID funding provided for the printing of 5,387 copies of various legal codes and documents to expand the quantity of legal information available to judges and enhance the quality of judicial decision-making.

The Embassy's Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) provided financial support totaling $70,000 to three organizations during Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, promoting women's rights and civic education for the pastoralist Karayu people in southern Ethiopia and a workshop on conflict resolution for warring Muslim tribesmen in the Afar region. Another $70,000 was allocated to fund six DHRF projects during FYs 2002 and 2003, ranging from establishing a pro-bono legal clinic in Addis Ababa, to conducting workshops in several regions promoting popular participation in local government, to training instructors to educate their peers on the harmful effects of traditional practices like female genital mutilation.

PHOTO: USAID/Ron Sibley

The Embassy's Public Affairs Section sponsored two journalism training sessions during the year, in which 37 journalists participated. The Embassy also sent five people to the U.S. on International Visitor Programs that focused on such issues as foreign policy and human rights, the U.S. judicial system, trafficking of women and children, and organized labor. The Public Affairs Section brought in a speaker to address conflict resolution.

The Embassy oversaw a $383,000 grant from the Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to educate secondary school students in Addis Ababa and other localities about the dangers of trafficking in persons to the Middle East. Complementing these efforts is a $136,000 USAID-funded "Be Informed" campaign, also being conducted by IOM. This project aims to empower potential migrants by providing information about the realities of irregular migration, particularly the risks for women.

The Mission also oversaw a local rape crisis intervention project in Addis Ababa, funded by the Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau. The center has trained 29 first responders in sexual assault intervention techniques since July 2001, and has developed guidelines for treating sexual assault victims that are presently in use in area hospitals.

GABON

Gabon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. Although opposition parties have been legal since 1990, a single party, the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG), has remained in power since 1968. PDG leader El Hadj Omar Bongo, President since 1967, was reelected for another 7-year term in 1998 in an election marred by irregularities.

The Government's human rights record remained poor; and it continued to commit serious abuses. The security forces beat and tortured prisoners and detainees; arbitrary arrest and detention were problems; and the judiciary remained subject to government influence. Forced labor remained a problem, and trafficking in children was a serious problem. No law specifically prohibited trafficking in persons, and the Government neither actively investigated cases of trafficking nor prosecuted any cases against traffickers.

To promote the development of a free and independent press, the Mission provided $9,000 through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to a local non-governmental organization (NGO) to sponsor a seminar on the use of publicity in media development. In addition, the Mission gave $11,000 to a local NGO for an information campaign to combat discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients.

To address the country's difficulty with trafficking in children, the Ambassador and Mission personnel approached presidential, ministerial and working-level officials of the Government and parlia-

mentary leaders to engage them on the need for concrete measures to stop trafficking. The Embassy also coordinated efforts with the NGO community to keep the trafficking issue at the top of the Government's agenda.

The Mission secured $60,000 to provide training and equipment for a special police unit to prevent child trafficking. The Embassy then used the availability of the funds as leverage to push the Government toward passing a law that would criminalize child trafficking. In March 2003, the National Assembly President introduced a bill that would criminalize child trafficking in the country. The Assembly President chose an Embassy-sponsored anti-trafficking seminar to announce the introduction of the bill.

In May, the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC) launched a 3-year, $200,000 project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor focused on prevention, institutional capacity-building and strategies to fight trafficking. The Embassy subsequently worked with ILO/IPEC regional personnel and the project manager to provide guidance on strategy development and local contacts.

The Embassy gave $12,000 to a collective of local NGOs to undertake a multimedia campaign to increase public awareness of child trafficking. The Mission also provided $10,000 from the DHRF to a local NGO to organize a March 2003 conference to improve coordination among anti-trafficking NGOs.

Over the last two years, the Secretary of State and other senior Department officials raised the issue of child trafficking with President Omar Bongo and other senior officials during meetings in both Libreville and Washington. A senior U.S. official also visited Gabon in 2002 to discuss the country's role in the UN Commission on Human Rights.

THE GAMBIA

In public and private, the United States' human rights strategy promotes three core values: democratic freedoms, the rule of law, and human dignity. The Embassy emphasizes the connection between the restoration of democratic rule and the respect for human rights, on the one hand, with the benefits of improved relations with the U.S., on the other, e.g., African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) eligibility, renewed military assistance, and the return of visible USAID programming.

Using the opening provided by the surprisingly successful presidential election in October 2001, as well as the legislative and local elections in 2002, the U.S. has established a frank and constructive dialogue with the Gambian government on human rights. The U.S. also maintains contacts with the opposition and civil society. The Embassy also coordinates with other diplomatic missions when addressing specific human rights concerns.

The lifting of Section 508 sanctions and achieving AGOA eligibility served as highly effective "carrots" in U. S. Government human rights strategy over recent years. The U. S. resumed non-lethal military assistance to The Gambia immediately

after Section 508 sanctions were lifted. The U. S. renewed the tradition (interrupted since 1994) of sending Gambian military officers on International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Expanded IMET programs. Gambian officers have recently attended training seminars focusing on civil-military relations and the proper role of the military in a democracy.

The USG continues to sponsor Democracy and Human Rights Fund projects, working with civil society and local NGOS to develop Gambian awareness of human and civil rights.

Embassy Banjul uses its small, yet effective public diplomacy program to underscore the need to consolidate the recent gains in democracy and human rights.

GHANA

U.S. human rights activities in 2002 and early 2003 were multifaceted and included efforts through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DRHF), Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS), USAID/Ghana, and Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs-funded projects designed to increase awareness of, and respect for, human rights. These activities were well received and highly successful, actively contributing to the improved human rights environment seen in Ghana in 2002.

The U.S. used DHRF funds in 2002 to support four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are working to diminish incidents of human rights abuses and improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable segments of Ghanaian society. With DHRF funding, the Muslim Family Counseling Centre conducted workshops to campaign against violence against women and children in four slum areas of Accra. Their focus was on sexual violence, female genital mutilation and forced child marriages. The Rural Women's Association conducted an awareness-raising campaign against abuse of women, focusing on the need for girl-child education. The African Women Lawyer's Association held a forum to review a nationwide questionnaire on sexual harassment in the workplace. Victims were interviewed, and a memorandum was created that will form the basis for new legislation against sexual harassment in the workplace. The Centre for Sustainable Development Initiatives provided legal rights training to 215 female micro-entrepreneurs to raise awareness about women's legal rights.

In 2002 USAID/Ghana used the Education for Development and Democracy Initiative (EDDI) to support organizations that advance the cause of human rights. Through EDDI, USAID supplied the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) with computers and Internet communications equipment for its headquarters and 10 regional offices. Better data management will enable CHRAJ to effectively monitor, report, catalogue and track human rights abuses, especially those perpetrated against society's more vulnerable women and children. Through their enhanced access to information and communications, CHRAJ regional offices will also serve as resource centers on human rights and anti-cor-

ruption education and provide a valuable link to the numerous civil society organizations involved with human rights education at the local level. The U.S also supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ghana to address the human rights abuses experienced in Ghana since independence in 1957, as well as judicial exchanges through the State Department to address corruption issues in the Ghanaian judiciary.

In 2002 Embassy Accra used INL funds to implement a highly successful eight-week Community Policing Program with the Ghanaian Police Service (GPS). An ICITAP Technical Advisor taught two iterations of a one-week Community Policing Course at the GPS Training College near Accra, and traveled throughout the country lecturing on the philosophy behind Community Policing to police, religious, and community leaders. ICITAP instructors also trained 20 GPS members in bicycle patrol techniques. The bicycle patrol program has been well received by the Ghanaian public and is having a significant remedial impact on the GPS's relationship with the public. The Ghanaian public views the bicycle patrols as the GPS taking a more active interest in protecting and serving them.

During 2002 the PAS held workshops on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for the legal and judicial communities, co-sponsored with the Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution at California State University, Sacramento. It held seminars on fighting corruption and encouraging transparency in government co-sponsored with the Ghana Integrity Initiative; made a grant to the Ghana Association of Chartered Mediators and Arbitrators for ADR training of leaders in Buduburum refugee camp; and issued various grants to train mediators, counselors and community leaders in the following organizations: Gender Violence Survivor Support Network, Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, and Leadership for Advocacy for Women in Africa.

PHOTO: IFES

GUINEA

The United States consistently holds up human rights and democracy as a cornerstone of U.S. policy in Guinea, emphasizing the need for progress on these issues in every speech. The Embassy consistently reminds Guinean interlocutors of their obligation under multiple international treaties and agreements concerning refugees, and praises them for hosting up to 700,000 refugees over last 13 years. In addition, the Embassy retains close ties and meets regularly with opposition parties, political dissidents, and local and international human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In 2002, the Mission provided military training to an 800-man battalion from the Guinean Armed Forces (GAF). One full week of the training was devoted to human rights, treatment of refugees and other non-combatants, and the role of a military in a democracy; these themes were constantly reinforced throughout the training. The Defense Attache Office also provides annual seminars to the GAF and civil society leaders on subjects including the military's legal obligations.

PHOTO: IFES

Public Affairs Section (PAS) resources are devoted to democracy-related activities, and the PAS provides multiple events specifically targeting democracy and human rights. In addition, at each of its many activities and for a, PAS encourages open discussion on all topics relating to democracy and human rights.

The USAID democracy and governance program influences the democratic process from the bottom-up through training of citizens, locally elected officials and representatives of government technical services, and top-down through the facilitation of dialogue and building capacity to respond to citizen demands at the national level. Assistance targets three areas: increased citizen participation in local governance, support for improved political processes, and capacity-building for civil society organizations to provide civic education and advocate for citizen interests with the administration.

The Embassy supports TOSTAN, an American non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Africa and funded primarily by UNICEF, to promote religious freedom as well as other education projects, with a $650,000 grant.

The Embassy annually receives more than $70,000 from the Democracy and Human Rights Fund, which has over the past year gone to projects promoting the rights of women, students and teachers and victims of HIV/AIDS, combating female genital mutilation, and providing training in conflict resolution and responsible media. The program has also funded projects researching the role of the press in local elections and providing Internet access to legal documents.

Furthermore, Guinea is one of five cocoa-producing countries participating in the U.S.-funded, three-year International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor to eliminate the worst forms of child labor from commercial agriculture.

GUINEA BISSAU

Currently, officers from the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, cover Guinea Bissau with regular trips. On each visit, embassy officers meet with senior Government officials, the political opposition, human rights observers and members of civil society. United States Government human rights concerns are always a priority item during discussions, whether the topic is arbitrary arrest, prisoners held incommunicado, harassment of journalists or opposition politicians, or basic political governance issues such as the failure of the Presidency to promulgate a new constitution, or actions of the Presidency that undermine the independence of the judiciary.

In 2001, the Embassy Dakar channeled $250,000 in Economic Support Funds (ESF) through the United Nations Development Program in Bissau to support activities promoting the rule of law. These resources funded a series of well attended and well received seminars for the judiciary, legislature and civil society focusing on the rule of law, separation of powers and the administration of justice.

In 2002 the Defense Attache's Office sponsored two members of the military for International Military Education and Training (IMET) in the U.S. In promoting professionalization of the military, IMET training has a key role to play in support of human rights.

Given our very limited presence in Guinea Bissau, Embassy Dakar has coordinated very closely on human rights and other priority issues with members of the international community working on Guinea Bissau. These include the office of the resident Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Bissau, and donor missions based in Bissau and in Dakar. Legislative elections are now scheduled for July 6, but are likely to be postponed, and Embassy Dakar has energetically advocated a unified international donor position linking election and post-election assistance to the resolution of the outstanding basic political governance issues — the lack of a definitive constitution, lack of an independent Supreme Court and continuing legal harassment of the political opposition.

While there are no systematic and massive human rights violations in Guinea Bissau, lack of a clear constitutional framework and the systematic use of the law as an instrument of repression have created an environment conducive to fundamental rights violations.

The Department of State provided $99,000, channeled through a non-governmental organization, to support demining activities in Guinea Bissau, and in 2003 provided an additional $225,000 for the same purpose.

KENYA

Kenya held successful multiparty general elections on December 27, 2002; election observers concluded the polling broadly reflected the popular will and was free and fair. For the first time since independence in 1963, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) lost the presidency and the majority of seats in Parliament. The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), a grouping of opposition political parties and former KANU leaders, swept the presidential and parliamentary results.

Torture continues to be a problem in Kenya. While the Constitution prohibits such acts, security forces continued during recent years to use torture and physical violence during interrogation and to punish both pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners. The Embassy provided a $1.4 million three-year grant to the U.S. International University to develop a training program and a comprehensive service-support system program for trauma and torture victims. USAID also awarded a grant to a local NGO to document, counsel, and treat torture survivors and their families.

A key component of the Embassy's strategy was support for competent, transparent electoral administration, which included $1.6 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) since March 2001 in assistance to the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) through the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). In the past, electoral administration was plagued by low voter registration, lack of access to voter registration lists, poorly trained election officials, and unacceptable delays in voting and counting. The Embassy's assistance focused on improving the ECK's capacity to administer the elections, through technical support and improved internal communication capabilities to ensure public security and provide secure transit of ballots and electoral results. Following the 2002 elections, the ECK was generally acknowledged to have provided better electoral administration than in the past.

U.S. strategy also entailed working with political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the media to expand the dissemination of accurate political, economic, and electoral information. This effort included USAID funding of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to help political parties participate more effectively in the political process. USAID provided $210,000 in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for a local organization, the Agency for Development Education and Communication (ADEC), to train political party agents. In addition, the International Republican Institute (IRI), with a $320,000 USAID ESF grant, conducted a campaign to promote voter registration. IRI's program also included a component to strengthen public opinion polling and included a series of presidential preference polls that closely mirrored the final presidential results. The Institute for Education in Democracy (IED), Muslim Civic Education Trust

(MCET) and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) implemented a $395,000 USAID ESF program utilizing radio, television, and print media to provide fora for political parties to debate each other and communicate their platforms to the voting public. Human Rights and Democracy Funds (HRDF) were also used to facilitate face-to-face media debates between the various candidates.

The Department and the Embassy collaborated on election monitoring. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) obligated $300,000 of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) to USAID to support election monitoring in Kenya. The program included mechanisms to create an explicit relationship between the media monitoring group and the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) and broader domestic monitoring and observation. The Embassy supported domestic election observation efforts during the election, focusing on funding critical activities not covered by other donors and providing international election observers to complement domestic observation efforts. More than 100 individuals volunteered for the effort, and mission observers were deployed to all provinces.

In the second year of a 3-year $200,061 grant for labor law reform funded by International Labor Affairs Bureau (ILAB), the International Labor Organization (ILO) continued the assessment and revision of Kenya's labor law to bring it into full conformity with ILO principles and to address issues such as child labor, discrimination, and civil service reform.

In 2002, Kenya was also in the second year of a 3-year $4,743,658 East Africa regional project with ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) to identify, withdraw, and rehabilitate approximately 7,500 children working under hazardous conditions in selected plantations and to provide families with viable alternatives to child labor. The project promotes adoption of effective legislation to prevent hazardous child labor and seeks to prevent some 15,000 at-risk children from entering the labor market prematurely. The International Labor Rights Fund also implemented an ESF-funded anti-sweatshop program through USAID.

The Embassy sought to prevent a recurrence of ethnic and political violence that escalated around previous elections. With assistance from USAID, the Central Depository Unit (a consortium of local NGOs) monitored and reported on electoral violence, providing valuable information to the media, the ECK, the political parties, and the general public. Election violence was markedly lower in the 2002 election period than in previous general election periods.

Some ethnic conflicts in Kenya spill over from neighboring countries, and there is significant internal conflict among various ethnic groups and political factions. USAID funded more than a dozen regional conflict-resolution programs, most with a cross-border focus. Many of the grantees were based in Kenya, especially groups working along Kenya's borders with Ethiopia and Somalia. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) received a $300,000 grant from ESF funds to strengthen communities' capacity

to prevent and resolve conflicts through peace-building at the community level. Through the establishment of village peace committees, this project has reduced inter-ethnic conflicts in Western Kenya, the North Rift, Nyanza, and Central Provinces and resulted in the voluntary resettlement of displaced families.

Finally, the ALVA consortium organized training and related activities for women politicians seeking higher office. The training was carried out in collaboration with Egerton University in Rift Valley Province.

LESOTHO

In the May 2002 election, the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy was returned to office winning 79 of the 80 constituency based seats (as it did in 1998). However, the 40 added proportional seats were divided among nine opposition parties. As a direct result of the engagement of the United States and other donor countries, Lesotho held a free and fair election. This is the first election since the restoration of democracy in 1993 that has not been marred by post-election violence by losing parties seeking to destabilize the country. A U.S. supported program of political party training run by the National Democratic Institute played an important role in decreasing tensions among Lesotho's political parties, particularly at the grassroots level. USAID-funded South African Development Community Parliamentary Forum missions also came to Lesotho during both the voter registration and election periods, providing important reassurance that both processes were transparent and lawful. Likewise, Embassy Maseru, with temporary assistance from Embassy Pretoria, fielded five observer teams on election day as part of a UN-coordinated election observation process. This process provided international legitimacy and was also crucial in deflating extravagant opposition claims that the election was stolen.

Embassy Maseru has creatively used Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) monies to strengthen Lesotho's courts during the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) trials, the largest anti-corruption case ever prosecuted in Africa, involving bribery in connection with a multi-billion dollar dam and watershed development project. In the course of the bribery trial of the former head of the LHDA, the Embassy learned that the presiding judge was having difficulty properly researching questions raised by defense motions due to the lack of a proper law library at Lesotho's high court. Embassy Maseru responded by using DHRF funds to purchase for the High Court a computer with an Internet connection and a subscription to the LEXIS/NEXIS service. Utilizing these resources, the High Court was able to do the legal research necessary to properly decide various motions made in the case and to write a 244-page opinion supporting the conviction of the defendant and his sentence to 18 years in prison. This was the stiffest sentence ever given for a bribery conviction in the southern Africa region and an important vindication of the rule of law in Lesotho.

The United States has also constructed its International Military Education and Training (IMET) program to advance democracy in Lesotho. The focus of the

IMET program has been to provide professional management and technical training to as wide a segment of Lesotho's military as possible, while always stressing the message that the military in a democracy should remain an apolitical and professional institution. War-fighting has not been part of Lesotho's IMET program in recent years.

The military remained completely out of the political process during the 2002 elections, in contrast to 1998 where segments of the military were actively involved in trying to overthrow the democratically elected government.

The U.S. has also worked with the Lesotho to strengthen Lesotho's justice system. Especially important in this regard was the opening of the regional International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Botswana in 2001. The Lesotho Government is enthusiastic about the possibilities that ILEA offers to professionalize Lesotho's police force and has filled every ILEA slot offered. Lesotho's Home Affairs Minister welcomes USG assistance in all areas of law enforcement, including immigration control and counter-terrorism.

The U.S. has actively promoted the concept of worker's rights in Lesotho. The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has been an important aid in this regard. The Lesotho Government has been very willing to work closely with the Embassy to make sure that the local labor code conformed to international standards and that local manufacturers got the message that anti-union actions and unsafe workplaces would not be tolerated. The Embassy has used DHRF and public diplomacy International Visitor Programs to provide training to labor unions in the workers' rights area. The Embassy has also fostered communication among all stakeholders, including U.S. customers, regarding to necessity for strict adherence to AGOA requirements on workers' rights.

The Embassy has also deployed DHRF funds to strengthen local human rights non-governmental organizations. The Media Institute of Lesotho has received funds to promote ethical practices in the media and to strengthen human rights reporting. The Lesotho Law Reform Commission has received funding to aid its work on a bill to abolish traditional restrictions imposed by marital status and to equalize the status of women in Lesotho. The Lesotho National Association of the Physically Disabled received money to raise public awareness of the rights of people with physical disabilities.

LIBERIA

Embassy Monrovia has created and continued programs to address human rights abuses and has consistently maintained a dialogue on these matters with the Government of Liberia (GOL). Embassy officials regularly meet with both GOL officials and human rights organizations to urge the curtailment of human rights abuses in Liberia. The U.S. has made strong public statements denouncing abuses. On January 2, for instance, at his monthly press conference, the Ambassador highlighted the plight of political prisoners in Liberia, often held incommunicado and tortured.

Since the GOL does not have a formal human rights office or a mechanism to promote human rights, the USG Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) is an important means of promoting democracy and human rights through Liberian advocacy groups. The Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL), Liberia Women Initiative and the Movement for Democratic Elections in Liberia have all benefited from the DHRF program to promote democracy, human rights and good governance through workshops, civic education, drama and awareness campaigns. Currently, there is a bill before the Liberian legislature sponsored by AFELL to promote women's rights in Liberia.

The Embassy is the most visible foreign organization protecting and promoting human rights and democracy in Liberia. Through its Public Affairs Office, the Embassy has promoted and held workshops for journalists and local human rights advocates. Additionally, Embassy Monrovia has collaborated with the Liberia Democracy Resource Center and sponsored civic education activities in high schools around the country.

The treatment of political prisoners in Liberia is particularly important to the U.S. The release of journalist Hassan Bility is one noteworthy example of Embassy efforts. Bility was accused of aiding a rebel group and was jailed in June 2002. The Embassy objected to Bility's incarceration because he was not given access to lawyers, was not tried in a civilian court and was tortured. After an extensive campaign by the Embassy along with local and international groups, Bility was released in December 2002.

The Ambassador and senior Embassy officers have personally intervened and brought pressure on the GOL through meetings with senior government officials. In recent meetings, for example, the Embassy has raised government harassment of Mandingo Muslims and urged the Liberian government to ensure humanitarian treatment of refugees that have streamed across the border from Cote d'Ivoire. In large part because of persistent lobbying by Embassy officers, the GOL ratified during 2002 the International Labor Organization Convention to Eliminate Child Labor.

MADAGASCAR

The December 2001 presidential elections and ensuing political crisis colored much of the Embassy's democracy and human rights work. There was widespread, politically motivated conflict that led to approximately 100 deaths. In May 2002, Marc Ravalomanana was declared President, and by June the Ravalomanana Government gained control of the country. The December 15 legislative elections were judged by international observers as generally free and fair.

The Embassy promotes key democratic values through Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grants, especially in provincial regions. In 2002, DHRF grants of approximately $50,000 supported good governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights and funded projects to improve prison conditions for minors, expedite extreme cases of preventive detention, make the Legal Code more accessible to laymen, and establish a nationwide human rights register.

PHOTO:IFES

Eight Embassy personnel observed the December 15 legislative elections, traveling to all provincial capitals and other regions to witness election organization, voting, and counting and reporting of votes. An Economic Support Fund (ESF) allocation of $400,000 supported local election observation, voter education programs, training of local government election administrators, and transportation of election officials and ballots. The elections were, on the whole, well organized, transparent, and credible.
During the political crisis, the Embassy's Public Affairs Section invited Dr. Joyce Neu, Director of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego, to meet with Ministers, legislators, political and civil society leaders, media and human rights groups, and minority group representatives. Discussions focused on peace, justice, tolerance, and political reconciliation in post-conflict situations.

The Embassy coordinates and the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) chairs the monthly Madagascar Human Rights Working Group (HRWG). The HRWG includes lo-cal and international human rights groups, representatives from several ministries, and a wide range of individual ac-tivists, and sessions include presentations, question-and-answer periods, and a review of the past month's human rights-related developments in Madagascar. The HRWG provides a vehicle for advancing U.S. human rights objectives and a regular forum for official and civil society to discuss and debate contentious issues.

MAURITANIA

Mauritania is a highly centralized Islamic Republic dominated by a strong presidency. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Child labor in the informal sector was common. There continued to be reports that slavery in the form of forced and involuntary servitude persisted in some isolated areas; that unofficial, voluntary servitude persisted; and that former slaves continued to work for former masters or others.

Following a November 2002 Amnesty International report calling for the Government to take more direct action to

reverse the vestiges of slavery, which was banned in 1981, Embassy officials met with human rights advocates and government officials to discuss ways that the U.S. Government could best support government and civil society efforts to address social inequalities and prejudices. The May 2002 visit of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member and the December 2002 visit of an official from the Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor provided opportunities to reinforce civil society efforts to address the vestiges of slavery and reinforce the nascent independent press. These visits also led to discussions with a wide range of citizens on ways in which the U.S. Government could help strengthen democratic institutions and further the development of political party structures.

Using International Military Education Training (IMET) funding, in January 2002 the Embassy sponsored a week-long seminar on civil-military relations. Seminar moderators challenged participants, including senior military leaders, members of the National Assembly and Senate, and various government officials, to understand each other's perspectives and roles in a developing democracy. The program was very well received and publicized, and many participants acknowledged it was the first time they had the opportunity for substantive discussions with such a broad range of civilian and military colleagues.

In coordination with Department offices, the Embassy reviewed human rights records of members of military and security forces who participated in training conducted by U.S. Government civilian or military personnel. U.S. Defense Attache Office personnel based in Dakar and Nouakchott Embassy officials used the opportunity of these Leahy Amendment reviews to discuss with senior security and military officials the importance of protecting human rights in the conduct of law enforcement or military activities and of requiring human rights training for security and military personnel.

A Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) grant allowed the Embassy to work closely with the free press association to sponsor a series of seminars on the role of the press in a developing democracy and in election coverage and monitoring. The Embassy sponsored the participation of the editor of an independent Mauritanian newspaper in a September 2002 International Visitors Program (IVP) on "Investigative journalism" conducted by the Department's Education and Cultural Affairs bureau.

Embassy officials and various U.S. Government visitors on several occasions discussed religious freedom and tolerance with senior government officials and religious leaders. The Embassy engaged religious leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS, developing a close working relationship that also provided opportunities to discuss and promote religious tolerance.

During the August 2002 visit of a U.S. Department of Labor official, Embassy officials discussed collective bargaining practices and basic wage and working conditions issues with government officials and labor leaders. These discussions contributed to the current review of Mauritania's labor laws.

Throughout the year, Embassy officials encouraged the Government to adopt and implement key international agreements on trafficking of persons. In 2002, Mauritania ratified the Sale of Children and Child Soldiers protocols to the UN Convention on Children's Rights.

MOZAMBIQUE

Mozambique's constitutional Government, headed by President Joaquim Chissano, held its second general multiparty elections in 1999. President Chissano was reelected in generally free and fair elections. The Government's human rights record remained poor; although there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Police continued to commit numerous abuses, including unlawful killings, excessive use of force, and other abuses. Police officers continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention, beat persons in custody, and abused prostitutes and street children. Prison conditions remained extremely harsh and life threatening. Fair and expeditious trials were problematic due to an inefficient, understaffed, and underfunded judiciary, which was dominated by the executive and subject to corruption. The abuse and criminal exploitation of street children, including child prostitution, increased in urban areas, and child labor remained a problem.

Because many of the human rights abuses occurred within the justice system, the Embassy focused its human rights and democracy-promotion efforts in that sector; however, the Embassy addressed other human rights issues in areas such as political party development and the education of the public on human rights.

To foster a more professional police force and reduce human rights abuses, the Embassy used a $300,000 grant to support the training of key police officials and officials from the Attorney General's Office at the regional International Law Enforcement Academy in Botswana.

To improve the country's judicial system, the Mission invested $100,000 of USAID and other U.S. Government funding to strongly emphasize anti-corruption efforts at the national level. In addition to supporting the Government's Anti-Corruption Unit, the Embassy invited experts from the U.S. Department of Justice and other U.S. Government agencies to meet with local prosecutors and draft an assessment and strategic plan. Embassy funds also sent the six members of the anti-corruption unit to the U.S. to meet with counterparts and observe the judicial process. The Mission worked closely with a local non-governmental organization (NGO) to strengthen civil society efforts on corruption and to support a survey on corruption.

The Mission has encouraged the Attorney General's Office to pursue cases that involve corruption, particularly in the Government. An indirect result of this pressure was the prosecution of those involved in the 2000 murder of the well-known journalist, Carlos Cardoso, and the investigation into the Ministry of Interior after one of the accused escaped from a maximum security prison. The trial was broadcast on radio and television and resulted in maximum sentences for six defendants. Since then, investigations of the President's son (named by the defen-

dants as a conspirator) and of various bank and Ministry officials have been opened.

Especially relevant due to upcoming 2003 municipal elections and 2004 national elections, U.S. Government efforts in promoting democracy continued to be quite strong. USAID has funded the National Democratic Institute's (NDI's) activities in political party development. NDI carried out several training sessions in 2002 with political parties, focusing on the elements of running a campaign and political party organization. The Mission also supported civic education to inform the public about the electoral process and the significance of voting. The Embassy used both Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) and USAID funds to support seminars for civil society on civic education in 2002.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funded Embassy efforts to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic by sponsoring workplace education programs to promote prevention and combat discrimination. Another DOL grant targeted industrial relations for improvement.

Using DHRF grants, the Embassy has funded various programs to educate the public on human rights. As a result of those grants, a local media organization started developing a supplement on human rights issues to be circulated throughout the country. In addition, an NGO has started a campaign on women's rights in coordination with the local government and will be organizing a seminar for local leaders and women. DHRF funds have also supported a radio station's production and broadcast of programming related to human rights issues.

The Mission worked to publicize a Human Rights Day event and coordinated a Children's Day that involved children doing art projects related to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Embassy also participated in a radio program to discuss human rights and the significance of the Universal Declaration.

The Mission has also sent various community members and Mozambican government employees on International Visitor Programs in 2002, on topics such as democracy, investigative journalism, and civic education.

NIGER

The United States is now funneling approximately $2,000,000 into multiple human rights and democracy programs in Niger. Through International Military Education and Training (IMET), the Embassy has sponsored successful civil-military training seminars stressing respect for human rights ($100,000). In 2002, the USG invested $80,000 in six new activities, including a study and workshop on religious fundamentalism, increased access to legal counsel for women and children, the collection and publication of international human rights treaties signed by Niger, support to women candidates in upcoming local elections, civic education in rural areas, and workshops on discrimination.

For the past several years, USAID has funded a limited number of activities to promote democracy and governance in Niger. One such activity included train-

ing for parliamentarians in legislative roles, responsibilities and implementation techniques. The National Democratic Insti-tute implemented this activity and worked closely with the national legislature. $400,000 in Economic Support Funds were secured to assist theGovern-ment and local partners in theconduct of the local elections. In 2001, the U.S. funded four local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) implementingDem-ocracy and Human Rights Fund activities, including activities to improve legal counsel in rural areas, workshops to discuss democratic issues, and sessions in local schools to promote increased understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each citizen in the democratic process, and the role of women in local goverment.

Africare and Helen Keller International will have installed a total of 25 solar-powered rural radio stations ($1,188,865) in three regions of Niger by the end of Fiscal Year 2003. Developmental messages, including messages on decentralization, voter education, agriculture, literacy and health are being broadcast locally, and all radio stations are linked to two-way radios to exchange information and news.

The U.S. is developing and implementing a $300,000 effort funded under the Leland Initiative to improve public access to the Internet, an essential element to increase information sharing, promote development and empower civil society. USAID has funded assessment and development trips to plan how to increase the number and improve the service of private Internet service providers.

NIGERIA

Nigeria's return to elected civilian governance in 1999 after almost two decades of military misrule represented an important political and economic opportunity for the country and West Africa as a whole. Despite significant improvements in basic civil liberties under civilian government, Nigeria continues to face serious violence and instability. Governmental, administrative and regulatory institutions remain weak and poorly coordinated. The period

PHOTO:IFES

since the 1999 election has been among the most violent in Nigerian history since independence, as numerous ethnic and religious disputes have flared. There is serious friction between the federal government and state and local governments over resources. Law enforcement is insufficiently trained and equipped to deal with outbreaks of ethnic and religious violence and the Government has been forced to call on the army to restore order on numerous occasions.

INL started a train-the-trainers program on police reform in August to improve the professionalism, responsibility and performance of the Nigerian police. A major portion of the program focused on respect for human rights, covering such topics as excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings. The USG has for the last three years assisted the Nigerian military to restructure itself to be more responsive to civil control and respect for human rights. The Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) sponsored two International Military Education and Training (IMET) seminars by the Center for Civil Military Relations and the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies. All the IMET students who attended training in the United States were exposed to rule of law and human rights issues as a part of their training curriculum. The U.S. Mission operated several programs addressing the institutional and legal shortcomings that lead to abuse of human rights in Nigeria. This U.S. assistance contributed to a significant decline in reports of military extrajudicial killings of civilians while performing policing roles in 2002.

PHOTO:IFES

U.S.-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local civil society groups worked with state and national legislatures to improve legislative processes and increase opportunities for citizen input. Extensive investment was also made in training and technical assistance to improve the capacity of election administration authorities to carry out upcoming local and national elections, and to enhance political parties' abilities to compete on issue-based platforms, promote women's participation and build better communications with their grassroots affiliates. The USG provided $10.5 million in 2001 and 2002 to support the 2003 elections. Another $1.2 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and $575,000 in development assistance were made available in March 2003. Assistance focussed on support for international monitors, technical assistance

and training for domestic monitors, Independent National Election Commission (INEC) poll workers, party agents, and INEC officials, and funding for electoral material security safeguards.

Nigeria's recently completed presidential, legislative, gubernatorial, and state assembly elections were more peaceful than anticipated, but were marred by serious irregularities in parts of the country. Due to these flaws, the outcomes of numerous races are disputed and these disputes have heightened political tension in some areas; however, most Nigerians hope that these elections will produce Nigeria's first successful and sustained transition from one civilian administration to another. Most of the major parties were guilty of electoral misconduct to some degree. The net result of vote tampering may have favored the PDP, contributing to the People's Democratic Party (PDP) domination of gubernatorial and legislative races. The PDP holds 28 of 36 governorships and will control over 65 percent of the National Assembly. President Obasanjo won nearly 62 percent of the popular vote; ten percentage points less than he received in 1999; nevertheless electoral malpractices may have increased to his overall margin of victory in the 2003 elections. Electoral tribunals have been empanelled to hear complaints. This will be a monumental test for the Nigerian judiciary: whether it will act in a sufficiently independent and nonpartisan manner by adjudicating the proper remedy where material misconduct has been proven.

The Embassy funded Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) projects for the reduction of corruption in the government. The Embassy funded a DHRF project to support the eradication of female genital mutilation. In addition, PAS, with a vigorous International Visitors Program, with input from several different sections of the Mission, included representatives from NGOs, the host government and civil society in a wide range of programs, notably conflict resolution, NGO management, empowerment of women, trafficking issues, and Islam in America. USAID programs also worked with a wide range of civil society organizations, including advocacy training for women's groups and assistance for other groups to address the numerous communal and religious conflicts that have continued to occur.

The State Department has committed $2.3 million to combat trafficking in persons in Nigeria. A $350,000 program for Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is designed to harmonize regional anti-trafficking legislation and law enforcement responses to trafficking in persons. The Department of Justice has provided $350,000 from its International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) program to train prosecutors, law enforcement, and judicial officials. An additional $500,000 from ESF supports two rehabilitation shelters (one in Edo and one in Lagos) that are critical links in the victim-rehabilitation pipeline. The Department of Labor is providing financial backing for the International Labor Organization's Program to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor. USAID is also committing development assistance funds to antitrafficking programs. The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration is

funding an HIV/AIDS component to the rehabilitation program for trafficking victims. USG officials traveled to Nigeria in 2002 to help raise public awareness, meet with government officials, law enforcement, and NGOs. Public Affairs (PAS) held a workshop on trafficking on International Women's Day.

RWANDA

The largely Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took power in 1994 and declared a government of National Unity that has functioned during the transition period following the civil war and 1994 genocide. The RPF remained the principal political force that controlled the government. President Paul Kagame was sworn in on April 22, 2000, in the first nonviolent presidential change in the country's history. Rwandans overwhelmingly approved a new constitution in June, and national elections are scheduled for late 2003.

The Government's human rights record remained poor. The majority of human rights abuses committed by security forces were in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Security forces beat suspects, and arbitrary arrest, detention, and prolonged pretrial detention remained serious problems. The judiciary was subject to executive influence and did not always ensure due process or expeditious trials. The Government continued to conduct genocide trials at a slow pace, and the first "Gacaca" courts, which represent the rural justice system put in place to try genocide suspects, began operation in July.

Embassy efforts to build democratic institutions and create a climate favorable to human rights were carried out through USAID, public affairs programs and the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF). Furthermore, the Embassy made every effort to highlight the importance of democracy and human rights in speeches and in interaction with Government authorities and civil society representatives.

USAID provided funding for programs related to the implementation of the Gacaca system, including funding to develop a case-management database system for the rural courts and vehicles to transport Gacaca officials and data to and from provinces. USAID also funded a Johns Hopkins University community sensitization campaign that encouraged participation in the Gacaca process. It supported U.S.-based private voluntary organization (PVO) Internews, which disseminated information in rural areas about the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha via mobile screenings of videos produced at the tribunal.

Mission personnel conducted province-level conferences focusing on law reform and human and civil rights. The Embassy sponsored a number of law and governance seminars, including the March 2002 Law Reform and Law Revision Conference. The conference brought in regional experts and followed up on an August 2001 conference on the constitution. Among the conference's outcomes was the recommendation to form a financially independent judiciary, a provision included in the new constitution.

Throughout the year, the Mission delivered demarches emphasizing the promotion of democracy and the human rights of refugees to high-level officials in the Government. The Mission used demarches to support the position of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the involuntary refoulement of Congolese refugees from Rwanda and the mistreatment of refugees while in camps in Rwanda. The Embassy has avidly followed the case of the repatriation of Rwandan ex-combatants cantoned at Kamina and reminded the Government of the need to respect their rights. In April 2002, the Embassy coordinated efforts with the European Union for a joint demarche on the arrest of former President Pasteur Bizimungu, a key issue in the struggle to attain political transparency in Rwanda.

USAID continued to fund a number of democracy and governance activities through the Government and local international non-governmental organizations. It assisted in the compilation of an accurate voter database and the manufacture of ballots in preparation for the constitutional referendum and the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 2003. USAID also continued to provide technical assistance and training support to government officials in support of the Government's decentralization program and to the National Assembly.

To promote worker rights, the U.S. Department of Labor funded the Regional Program on the Prevention and Reintegration of Children Involved in Armed Conflicts in Central Africa as a part of its International Child Labor Technical Assistance.

USAID funded CARE International's Civil Society Strengthening Project and the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) project, both of which have significant components aimed at furthering awareness of and respect for human rights. The CARE Program aims to build the assessment, implementation, and monitoring capacity of a number of civil society networks, including one focused on human rights promotion. One component of IRC's program is human rights training for judicial police.
The Mission continued to use the International Visitor Program (IVP) to promote awareness of democracy and human rights principles. The Embassy sponsored participation in numerous IVPs, including topics such as conflict resolution, good governance and grassroots democracy.

The Embassy launched three DHRF grants in 2002. The first grant project examined the rights of children in Kigali; the second published a manual about women's and children's rights; and the third conducted seminars on basic human rights and the Gacaca system in Gitarama Province.

The Ambassador took advantage of numerous speaking engagements to reinforce the importance of and U.S. commitment to respect for human rights and democracy. For example, in her December 10 speech commemorating Human Rights Day, the Ambassador highlighted the need to respect human rights and emphasized that a human rights-based response to HIV/AIDS should be a priority in the struggle to attain universal human rights.

SIERRA LEONE

The primary U.S. interest in Sierra Leone is the consolidation of the peace, which has been established principally due to massive intervention by the international community, in a sub-region marked by increasing instability. Preventing a relapse into civil conflict and promoting the current tremendously improved human rights climate is the aim of all USG efforts in Sierra Leone. This requires stable, democratic governance marked by significantly greater probity and transparency and broader effective participation than has been the case for most of Sierra Leone's independent history. None of these is achievable without a continuing, long-term commitment of very substantial outside oversight and resources.

Past human rights abuses were directly related to extreme insecurity in the country. Consequently, much of our effort to address the immediate source of human rights abuses is directed at strengthening the ability of the Government to provide for the security of its citizens. Several incidents of human rights abuses in 2002 were attributed to belligerents in the conflict in neighboring Liberia. Both sides in that conflict sent armed foraging parties into Sierra Leone to loot border communities and abduct Sierra Leone citizens to serve against their will as porters and possibly in other capacities. Our provision of helicopter services, paid for by peacekeeping funds, to the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) have assisted in strengthening border security.

Through the application of $15 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) over three years, the USG is the largest financial contributor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which has a mandate from the UN Security Council (UNSC) to try those with the greatest responsibility for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in Sierra Leone since 1996. The USG also gives the SCSL strong political backing in the UNSC and on the UN management committee. The Ambassador and members of his country team are in regular contact with senior SCSL officials to determine how the USG can most effectively support the Court. Successful implementation of the SCSL's mandate will send a strong message throughout Africa that the culture of impunity is fast ending.

The U.S. contributed $500,000 in ESF to Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We have closely followed the establishment of the TRC and the Ambassador has weighed in with key players to assure effective management of USG resources in support of the TRC's mandate.

The U.S. participates in the UK-led effort to remake the armed forces and police into effective forces responsive to civilian authority. Three American military personnel embedded in the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) and U.S.-funded helicopter support have contributed substantially to IMATT's capabilities and burnished its international credentials. Our Defense Attache Office organized a conference to

promote improved civil-military relations. Exceptionally poor civil-military relations have been a chronic impediment to democratic governance in this society. During 2002 we secured and filled two training slots for qualified SLP officers at the FBI training academy at Quantico.

All elements of the U.S. Mission make democratic practice an element of their dialogue with key contacts in civil society, including religious leaders, women, politicians in government and opposition, and the media. We also underline the significance of improved democratic practice to sustaining U.S. engagement in Sierra Leone. Our Mission focuses our enhanced Public Diplomacy capability on issues of democratic practice with all relevant audiences. Through USAID, the Democracy and Human Rights Fund and other resources, we support the activities of the National Democratic Institute and other relevant non-governmental organizations that promote human rights and good governance.

SOMALIA

Somalia has been without a central government since its last president, dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, fled the country in 1991. In May 2000, in Arta, Djibouti, delegates representing all clans and a wide spectrum of Somali society participated in a "Conference for National Peace and Reconciliation in Somalia." The Conference adopted a charter for a three-year Transitional National Government (TNG) and selected a 245-member Transitional National Assembly (TNA). Administrations in the northwest (Somaliland) and northeast (Puntland) do not recognize the results of the Djibouti Conference, nor do several Mogadishu-based factional leaders. Serious inter-clan and intra-clan fighting continues in parts of the country.

Since there is no U.S. Embassy in Somalia, Embassy Nairobi is responsible for covering Somalia. During visits to Somalia, the Embassy has encouraged participation in Somali reconciliation to develop countrywide democratic institutions and also addressed human rights violations on an individual basis when aware of them. In August, two Somali non-governmental organizations (NGOs) used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund to host a five-day training workshop in Hargeisa, Somaliland, in which various human rights groups discussed general human rights issues, investigation of human rights violations, reporting techniques, and advocacy mechanisms. They also established a seven-member committee to coordinate activities throughout the country. In July and August in the Puntland region, Puntland leader Abdullahi Yusuf arrested a number of civil rights activists to prevent them from traveling to the conference in Hargeisa. The Embassy intervened with Yusuf and the detainees were released.

The USG has financially supported the current Somalia reconciliation process, led by Kenya on behalf of the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which began in October 2002 and is ongoing. The Embassy's "Somalia Watcher" has been an active observer at the talks, which have as their goal the establishment of governance in Somalia acceptable to all Somalis.

Somaliland, the self-proclaimed republic in northwestern Somalia, held municipal elections in December 2002 and presidential elections in April 2003. According to the announced results in the presidential contest, the incumbent, Dahir Riyale Kahin, won a very narrow victory; his principal challenger, Ahmad Muhammad Silanyo, announced that his party would peacefully protest the outcome. The USG maintains informal contacts with Somaliland authorities, as it does with a number of other Somali groups. However, it does not have an official relationship with Somaliland and therefore did not provide direct electoral assistance to the Somaliland authorities. The USG did provide financial assistance to NGOs for party-building, and USG officials visiting Somaliland have encouraged political leaders to develop democratic institutions.

In 2002 the Embassy funded a series of workshops sponsored by the Somali NGO Save Somali Women and Children that focused on women's rights. The NGO brought together over 150 women in Mogadishu and helped form the Somali Women's Caucus to perpetuate education on human rights issues in Mogadishu, focusing on the relationship between human rights and Shari'a law.

The Embassy also funded projects in the Gedo region of southwestern Somalia that concentrated on conflict resolution. In Gedo, a local NGO conducted a two-month training program for traditional elders, civil society groups, and representatives from the local authority on good governance and conflict avoidance. In Mogadishu, a traditional elder held an 11-day workshop, funded by the Embassy, on conflict resolution for traditional elders, civil society members, and clan leaders.

SUDAN

The current regime, led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, suspended the 1985 Constitution, abrogated press freedom, and only recently allowed token opposition parties to function. In 1991, Shari'a law was established, and punishment for minor crimes has been harsh in the past. Civil liberties are restricted despite a new constitution in 1998. Members of the security forces are accused of torture and brutality. During the ongoing civil war in the south, there have been extrajudicial killings, abductions, forced conscription, and slavery. In addition, other areas of Sudan, particularly the oil-rich center, experience a high level of civil unrest and turmoil, leading to human rights abuses.

In 2002, the United States worked to stop terrorism, assure free access of humanitarian aid to all areas of Sudan, and end the civil war in the south. The Embassy maintained regular contacts with both government human rights groups as well as with human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Since September 2001, the United States has engaged both parties to the civil war in an effort to reach peace. The effort was initiated by Special Envoy John Danforth in the form of tests the parties could undertake in order to demonstrate their will to seek peace. These tests included a period of tranquility for health treatment, a cessation of hostilities in the Nuba Mountains area, a halt to attacks on civilians, and the

institution of a U.S.-led international eminent persons group to investigate slavery abductions and forced servitude. That effort spurred the engagement of the parties to participate in the peace talks, ongoing since June 2002.

Among Embassy efforts that focused on encouraging respect for human rights were its involvement in various activities associated with the peace process, specifically those focused on the guarantee of fundamental human rights in a post-conflict Sudan. In July 2002, the historic Machakos Protocol was signed in which the role of religion and the state and the right of self-determination for the south were addressed. This protocol provides a blueprint for the encouragement of human rights and democracy in the Sudan and its enforcement is a Mission goal. The United States with its Troika partners the United Kingdom and Norway remain actively engaged in the ongoing peace process by supporting the efforts of the peace talks mediator, retired Kenyan General Lazaro Sumbeiywo.

The U.S. provided assistance and support to the civilian protection monitoring team (CPMT) that began to function during 2002. The CPMT seeks to objectively document intentional military attacks against civilians occurring in the warring areas and to bring them to the attention of both the Government and the Sudanese Popular Liberation Movement (SPLM). In addition, since April 2002 $12.5 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) funds have been provided to the Joint Military Commission monitoring the cease-fire in the troubled Nuba Mountains region. A distinct improvement in the humanitarian and human rights situation in the region has occurred as a result of the ceasefire.

The Embassy actively promoted a just interpretation of "the rule of law." For example, Embassy officials monitored laws that infringed on human rights and engaged directly. Specifically, Embassy staff were able to investigate and engage the Government of Sudan concerning a case of alleged forced conversion and marriage of a Coptic Christian. The Embassy was able to meet the woman personally and intervened with the Ministry of Justice and the local mayor's office on several occasions.

To encourage democracy, Embassy officials have met with members of the ruling party as well as with the opposition parties. Human rights were a primary focus. The Embassy has protested the arbitrary arrest and detention of members of the political opposition.

The Embassy also promoted freedom of the press by holding open press conferences in which local journalists asked questions that were not pre-screened of the CPMT monitors. This allowed for official responsibility and discussion of both sides' human rights abuses in a neutral space.

To encourage religious freedom, the Embassy has cultivated wide contacts among different religious organizations and invited both Christian and Muslim Sudanese religious leaders to official Embassy functions.

SWAZILAND

Swaziland is an absolute monarchy and political parties are banned. The Government's respect for the rule of law regressed noticeably during 2002 as it announced its intention to disregard several court decisions that it deemed politically threatening. The Government continued to ignore certain foreign direct investors' violations of international labor standards and domestic labor laws. There were widespread allegations that some garment manufacturers did not comply with the labor laws and that the Government did not enforce the law effectively within this sector. The U.S. focused its human rights strategy on improving public understanding of constitutional principles and democracy, promoting respect for the rule of law, and fostering a healthy industrial relations environment in which workers' rights and unions are respected.

Although the Constitution has been suspended since 1973, in early 2002, the Government began a constitutional drafting exercise. The Embassy supported this project by developing a civic education program, in conjunction with the International Development Law Organization, aimed at improving public understanding of constitutional protections and the importance of political participation. Through this program, the Embassy works with civic groups, parliamentarians, judicial system representatives, and other government officials to increase understanding of constitutional systems and how various stakeholders can effectively participate in a constitutional government.

The Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) and public diplomacy (PD) programs to support the judiciary and civic groups striving to draw public attention to the need to respect an independent judiciary and the rule of law. In particular, the Embassy used the International Visitors Program (IVP) to expose members of the judiciary to the U.S. court system, and build an awareness of the need for transparency and accountability within the judiciary. DHRF funds facilitated communication among civic groups, including the law society, as they worked to pressure the Government to respect the rule of law.

Increasing government and business commitment to upholding internationally recognized workers' rights has been another focal point of U.S. human rights strategy. By sponsoring African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) educational workshops, the Embassy worked with the business community, government officials, and labor unions to ensure that these groups understand their obligations under AGOA and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to uphold workers' rights. By drawing attention to alleged problems in this respect and to union discrimination within the garment sector in particular, the Embassy gained both government acknowledgment that problems exist and a commitment to increasing efforts to enforce existing laws prohibiting union discrimination. The Embassy has also used the PD speaker program to bring a labor expert to Swaziland to strengthen local understanding of the role labor unions can play in building a healthy industrial environment.

TANZANIA

While there have been improvements in respect for human rights in recent years, the Government's overall record remains poor. Police were more disciplined during the year; however, members of the police and security forces committed unlawful killings and mistreated suspected criminals. The most serious violations of human rights resulted from election-related violence in Zanzibar in 2001 that left approximately 30 persons dead, 300 seriously injured, and more than 2,000 refugees. The Embassy consistently engaged the Government on a range of human rights issues and has a coordinated strategy with all USG agencies at the Embassy to best affect change.

With $265,000 in funding from Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), the Regional Security Office provided practical training and equipment to enable police to better safeguard security while upholding standards of human rights and democracy. The Civil Disorder Management Training, which was completed in April, gave police the skills to manage large demonstrations, protect demonstrators' rights against ill-treatment, and build the Government's confidence in its ability to manage demonstrations so that more rallies may be authorized rather than being banned outright. INL has also provided approximately $300,000 in multi-year funding for a forensic laboratory to improve police investigation skills, speed up investigations (during which the accused is often locked up in remand), and reduce the number of wrongful arrests and convictions.

The Embassy's Democracy Assistance programs and USAID's civil society strengthening program focus on long-term efforts to build the capacity of grassroots organizations and strengthen parliament to become a more dynamic representative, lawmaking, and oversight institution. During the recent tabling of a non-governmental organizations (NGOs) bill, USAID-funded NGOs launched an advocacy campaign to seek changes to the bill, which many considered fundamentally flawed. The Embassy's Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) focused on increasing awareness of civil, political, and human rights through grassroots and national campaigns. DHRF projects have supported expanded legal rights education, grassroots education about women and inheritance laws, human rights training for journalists, and the establishment of legal aid clinics.

The Public Affairs Section sponsors experts and exchange programs about human rights, democracy, and good governance to increase awareness of these issues. In January 2003, the Embassy sent two Muslim journalists, a Zanzibari and a mainlander, on an International Visitor Program on Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy.

The Embassy has been active in raising awareness about trafficking in persons and is a member of a working group that includes persons from the Ministries of Women and Children, Labor, and Education, and the Police Department's

Criminal Investigation Division, as well as international and local NGOs. This initiative corresponds with the Department of Labor-funded "Time Bound Program for Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor," which seeks to decrease the number of children working in the most exploitative sectors of mining, commercial agriculture and fishing, domestic labor, and prostitution. One DHRF project funds a community-based counseling center for victims of abuse and trafficking in Dar es Salaam. The Embassy also participated in a meeting with a rural traveling theater group lobbying locally for an end to Female Genital Mutilation.

With an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in excess of 12 percent and growing, the rights of people affected by the disease is becoming an issue of national dialogue. USAID support helped create the Tanzanian Parliamentarians AIDS Coalition (TAPAC), an NGO of Members of Parliament who seek to use their positions to advocate against discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, minimize stigma, protect orphans and vulnerable groups, and ensure proper accounting for the public funds designated to fight HIV/AIDS. With USAID health sector and democracy and governance support, the Tanzania Association of Women Lawyers (TAWLA) and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs are examining existing laws to protect people living with AIDS against all forms of discrimination, including in housing, employment, access to education, and health care.

TOGO

The U.S. Government (USG) worked through its Embassy and U.S. and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to educate Togolese voters, improve political party organization and skills and push all parties to participate in credible, transparent elections.

In 2002, the USG spent $15,000 to sponsor U.S. speakers in Togo focusing on corruption in government, professionalism in journalism on HIV/AIDS, and American studies. The USG in 2002 also spent $88,000 to send 11 Togolese to the United States on International Visitor Programs, focusing on government, human rights, civic education and women's empowerment. The U.S. sponsored programs and debates on good governance, promoting human rights and the rights of children, and making women aware of their rights.

With security assistance funding, the Mission sponsored several programs to engage the Togolese Armed Forces (FAT), a key player in Togo's democratic transition. The funding provided training for FAT personnel, contributing to their professionalism, helping them work constructively with the civilian population, and improving their efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In April 2002, the U.S. co-sponsored the second of two Africa-wide conferences to adopt a uniform military Code of Conduct for sub-Saharan African Armed Forces. The language hammered out in Lome is under consideration by the African Union to become a continent-wide primer on civil-military relations and respect for human rights by military forces. In August

2002, the U.S. used security assistance funds to host a seminar for Togolese military personnel and representatives of Togo's civil society to promote discussions between the two groups.

In compliance with the Leahy Amendment, the Mission worked closely with the Togolese Armed Forces to vet military units for training and entered the accumulated data into a database for the country team to review on a quarterly basis. Similarly, the Mission also vetted Togolese troops deploying to regional peacekeeping duties in Cote d'Ivoire aboard U.S. Government-supplied transport.

Mission officers have engaged the Togolese Government and Armed Forces at all levels to promote democracy and human rights. Meeting regularly with government officials, opposition leaders, human rights groups, journalists and civil society leaders, Embassy staff stress the importance of democratic elections and human rights. In spite of the setbacks — opposition boycotts, the ruling party's unilateral changes to the electoral code and Constitution — this moral suasion is still an effective strategy for promoting U.S. values.

Using $40,000 in Economic Support Funds, the USG supported a three-month National Democratic Institute evaluation and training project in Togo to work with all political parties. The project had been designed to run for six months, but did not do so because in March 2003, on the eve of the June presidential election, the Togolese government refused to allow further political party training.

Humanitarian assistance from the U.S. European Command totaling $80,000 went to supporting the human rights of two groups in Togo: victims of trafficking and people living with HIV/AIDS. This funding paid to renovate a center for repatriated children and furnish the center for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

UGANDA

President Yoweri Museveni continued to dominate the Government after he was reelected to a second five-year term in March 2001. His de-facto political party, the Movement, dominated the political process and limited the right of citizens to change their government. Since the 2001 presidential elections, opposition supporters have complained of arrests, detention without warrants, and utilization of so-called "safe-houses" where torture allegedly occurs. Security forces regularly beat suspects to obtain confessions and at times tortured detainees. Members of the security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained civilians, including opposition politicians and their supporters.

The USG actively participates in the Donor Democracy and Governance Group (DDGG), which established benchmarks on specific steps the Government needed to take to pursue democracy building and human rights goals. Utilizing Public Affairs programs and the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF), the Embassy engaged Ugandans at the grassroots to promote human rights concerns. USAID programming, primarily through its Democracy, Governance and Conflict Team, is at the center of our human rights efforts.

The Embassy engaged government officials directly at the presidential and Cabinet levels and supported private human rights institutions. In response to opposition supporters' complaints following the 2001 elections, Embassy personnel encouraged human rights groups to solicit details from victims and locations of safe-houses.

The Embassy also has worked to address the deprivations of northern Ugandans who have suffered during almost 16 years of war with Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels. USAID provided funding for former rebels granted amnesty seeking to return from Sudan and Kenya. It also provided funds through a consortium of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for community peace building and community support for formerly abducted and other war-affected children and victims of torture.

Embassy staff encouraged aggrieved political contenders following the 2001 and 2002 elections to challenge questionable election results in the courts. Although results have been mixed, the generally competent handling of these cases has reaffirmed faith in judicial independence.

The 2002 local elections had logistical delays, irregularities in distribution of electoral material and voting, confusion over electoral laws, lack of civic education, and electoral violence. Embassy personnel monitored many of the most contentious election locales. In response to a 2002 survey co-sponsored by the USG that showed only 21 percent of the electorate trusted the Electoral Commission (EC), Embassy staff met with newly appointed EC Commissioners to lend donor confidence in their appointments and offered technical assistance to rebuild the institution. USAID programming assisted an election-monitoring group to prepare a critique of 2001-2002 election failures and concrete suggestions for corrective legislation. Another USAID program assisted an election-monitoring NGO with strategic planning to become a watch-dog organization that would monitor democratization in the lead up to 2006 elections. The U.S. Department of Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance held numerous meetings on money laundering for many government officials.

The Ambassador met frequently with opposition political leaders and the Public Affairs Section of the Embassy offered International Visitors Programs (IVPs) to political and community leaders from a broad spectrum of society, providing visitors with hands-on experience of American systems and experiences.

The Embassy also promoted freedom of speech and the press. When the Government closed the independent daily newspaper for a week in October 2002, Embassy staff engaged President Museveni and appeared on the front page of the government-sponsored daily newspaper, strongly arguing for free speech.

In support of religious freedom, the Embassy used DHRF funds to sponsor a successful series of seminars promoting inter-religious (Christian-Muslim) harmony among Ugandans. Embassy officials spoke to Muslim groups and attended various programs. IVPs allowed influential Muslim leaders to travel to the

U.S., where they shared their experiences with fellow Muslims.

To supplement and broaden empowerment of women, three DHRF workshop projects brought rural women increased awareness of their constitutional rights, improved handling of domestic violence, and enhanced knowledge of local legislation that impacted their daily lives.

Fiscal Year 2002 was the third year of a four-year country program to eliminate child labor in Uganda. The program is funded by the Department of Labor through the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC). It targets children engaged in commercial sexual exploitation, street work, domestic work, and commercial agriculture. The program funds the efforts of a number of NGOs at the community level. The Department of Labor also funded a four year-regional program to Protect the Basic Rights of Workers, in which Uganda participated and a three-year ILO/IPEC initiative to remove children from the worst forms of child labor in commercial agriculture.

On March 28, 2003, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a solicitation for bidders to implement a 4-year $3 million Child Labor Education Initiative project that seeks to improve the accessibility and quality of basic education for children who either have been involved in the worst forms of child labor or are at risk of becoming involved.

ZAMBIA

The U.S. Government's effort to strengthen Zambia's poor human rights record has focused on promoting good governance and combating child labor. In addition, the Embassy has supported refugees, provided human rights training to police and members of the military, worked to promote equality for women, helped to strengthen labor institutions, funded projects aimed at protecting women and children from sexual abuse, and promoted effective dialogue between civil society and the Government.

To strengthen respect for the integrity of the person, the U.S. has supported human rights training for the country's police and members of the military. Over 70 law enforcement officials have received training at the International Law Enforcement Academy in Gaborone, Botswana. The Mission sent two members of the country's armed forces to the U.S. for a year's training and at least 40 hours of human rights instruction. Another five individuals from the military received human rights training while attending four- to eight-week courses in the U.S.

To build the media's ability to promote transparency in government and bolster freedom of the press, the Mission sent a reporter from an independent newspaper to participate in an International Visitor Program on investigative journalism.

To promote respect for political rights, the Mission has engaged the Government on two main fronts. First, to foster institutional reform in 2002, the Embassy chaired the donor coordination committee for parliamentary reform, and contributed

$350,000 to execute reforms. It signed an agreement with the National Assembly that set out a road map for creating an effective, independent legislature that can act as an equal partner in the governance of the country, rather than a rubber stamp for the executive branch. The second area of engagement concerned electoral reform. After closely contested elections in December 2001 revealed weaknesses in the electoral system, the Mission's efforts in 2002 focused on convincing the Government, civil society, and others of the need to work together to reach agreement on the electoral reform agenda. The Embassy used the Democracy and Human Rights Fund (DHRF) to support seminars on voters' rights and responsibilities, and workshops in four provinces aimed at fostering the participation of youth in democratic issues. In addition, the Embassy helped civil society research the U.S. Constitution; human rights advocacy groups continued to use the U.S. Constitution as a benchmark for drafting amendments to Zambia's constitution.

A number of Mission activities helped protect the rights of women and children. The Mission used the DHRF to support training for a paralegal program serving women and children who are victims of abuse and violence, as well as seminars to combat the traditional practice of "sexual cleansing", under which a widow is forced to have sexual relations with her late husband's relatives.

To combat child labor, the Mission supported and helped to launch several U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) programs. The U.S. Government invested $2 million in the International Labor Organization's (ILO's) International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), a four-year program targeting the worst forms of child labor such as commercial sexual exploitation. The U.S. also funded Education for Children in Vulnerable Situations, a new project under the Child Labor Education Initiative. USAID used $5.5 million to complement those programs by supporting the Government's Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Program, which assured that children who might have otherwise been engaged in labor had an opportunity to go to school. The U.S. also supported a three-year $5.3 million project called "Building the Foundations for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Anglophone Africa," which aimed to develop the ability of Government, workers and employers to safeguard worker rights.

The Embassy's efforts to foster a democratic, transparent and fair government included support for legal and institutional reform and practical assistance for the Government's campaign to combat corruption. The Embassy's Democracy and Governance Working Group mobilized $650,000 in funding for the anti-corruption campaign in 2003. The U.S. Government has supported the Director of Public Prosecutions, a key player on the task force set up to combat corruption. In addition, the Embassy invited a team from the U.S. Departments of Treasury and Justice to visit the country to determine how the U.S. can best help build the country's capacity to investigate and prosecute crimes involving complicated international money trails.

Disease, including HIV/AIDS, had a disproportionate impact on women and children. The Centers for Disease Control were active in combating HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases in the country, and health was the major focus of USAID's program. USAID's strategy included gender as a cross-cutting issue, and USAID's programs aimed to strengthen the ability of women and children to defend their rights. The Embassy implemented projects aimed at helping children, including the construction of a school and an orphanage.

With funds totaling $7.8 million, the U.S. Government was the largest donor to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and to local and international NGOs working with refugees in the country. The Mission regularly consulted with UNHCR and the Government over programs to protect refugees and seek durable solutions for their futures.

ZIMBABWE

In March 2002, President Mugabe was declared the winner of a presidential election widely viewed as flawed by international observers and preceded and followed by a government-sanctioned campaign of violence directed towards supporters and potential supporters of the opposition. Resolution of the underlying political crisis in Zimbabwe is necessary for real progress on improving human rights.

The U.S. Government has funded an organization that comprehensively documents and disseminates case information of human rights abuses. Embassy officials have also personally interviewed victims of political violence during extensive travels throughout Zimbabwe, maintained a visible presence at significant political events, and facilitated access for U.S. journalists. Although access to senior government officials has been quite limited, the Ambassador and other Embassy officers took advantage of available meetings with government officials to push for an end to political violence and restoration of the rule of law. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor supported these efforts with the issuance of a pamphlet, "Zimbabwe's Man-made Crisis."

USAID has also assisted victims of political violence, including funding documentation of atrocities, provision of legal assistance, and the establishment of centers for victims of torture and political violence in twelve cities and towns throughout Zimbabwe. The centers provide medical services, including psychological counseling, to victims as well as baskets of food and other essential commodities.

After the Government refused to accredit the delegation leader of a large mission from the European Union (EU) to observe the presidential election, the Embassy mounted its own observation effort and sent employees to all parts of the country. Embassy officers were also informal observers in subsequent parliamentary by-elections and rural district council elections.

USAID provided a range of assistance intended to strengthen legislative committees, one of the last venues where political discourse between the ruling and opposition parties still occurs openly. The

program provided outside expertise for committee work on bills and legislative oversight, technical assistance to committees for more effective public participation, support to the liaison committee on monitoring and evaluation of parliamentary reforms, mentoring and skills development of committee clerks, committee chairmen consultation and exchange program to South Africa, technical assistance to the research department to better support members and committee operations, and improved coordination between departments and the public relations office.

The Embassy used Democracy and Human Rights Funds (DHRF) to fund workshops for youths to develop radio dramas on political reconciliation, and to fund games events for urban youth to promote political tolerance. The radio dramas were produced, aired, and heard by thousands of Zimbabweans. Using the same funds, the Embassy helped print a civic awareness manual to educate rural women on their voting and other civic rights and organized workshops to present the manual. The Embassy also used DHRF funds to help a local organization hold workshops to educate rural farm workers on their voting rights.

With Economic Support Funds (ESF), a USAID grant, and Public Affairs Section (PAS) facilitation, Voice of America has begun a broadcast devoted to Zimbabwe five days a week. The program features interviews by Zimbabwean announcers with U.S. policymakers and Zimbabwean opinion makers on a range of key political, economic, and cultural topics. The program is the only broadcast of its kind that targets citizens who have limited access to independent media. USAID also funded the establishment of centers that will allow citizens access to independent media sources. In addition, PAS awarded grants for a series of media training workshops on political reporting, responsibilities of journalists in conflict management, and court and legal reporting.

USAID has funded initiatives for trade unions to assist them to become more accountable and responsive to their memberships and more effective at representing their constituents' interests.

The Department of Labor is funding HIV/AIDS Workplace Education programs. Extended over a four-year period, these programs focus on preventing the spread of HIV and on ending discrimination against its victims in the workplace.

The Embassy Public Affairs section has sponsored speakers, events, and exchange programs on human rights and democracy and good governance to increase awareness of these issues, including four visits to the U.S. in the International Visitors Program focused on human rights themes and a grant to churches in Manicaland for training workshops on conflict intervention and management.

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The promotion of democracy and human rights in East Asia and the Pacific has been complicated by the efforts of several Asian nations to legitimize human rights abuses under the rubric of fighting terrorism. This phenomenon has slowed the transition to democracy across Asia, but has by no means reversed the trend. The United States continues to be deeply disturbed by the deplorable human rights records of the North Korean and Burmese regimes. Overall, failures in the rule of law and the lack of transparent, functioning democratic institutions remain serious problems across parts of East Asia and the Pacific, as do military and government abuses of human rights.

Democracy and human rights policy in the region is an important part of USG efforts to improve our bilateral and multilateral relations in the region. In addition to normal bilateral meetings with Asian interlocutors, the U.S. sponsors long-running Human Rights Dialogues with China and Vietnam. The State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) currently funds a substantial number of programs in China and Tibet that seek to address the systemic challenges to democracy and rule of law. It also funds programs in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia, as well as an ASEAN-wide program. These programs support documentation of human rights abuses to promote accountability and transparency, local governance, and the rule of law in East Asian and Pacific nations. Our goal in Asia is to encourage governments in their transition to democracy and free and fair elections. The Administration pursues peaceful policies to cope with separatist movements in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and elsewhere that threaten to destabilize the region. The Administration also continues to speak out against the brutal repression and human rights abuses seen in several of the region's nations.

"Time and again, experience has shown that countries which demonstrate high degrees of respect for human rights also are the most secure and the most successful. Indeed, respect for human rights is essential to lasting peace and sustained economic growth, goals which Americans share with people all over the world."

Secretary Powell,
Release of Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2001
March 4, 2002

PESANTREN TRAINING IN INDONESIA

Islamic boarding schools (Pesantren) are influential community institutions in Indonesia. Nationwide, there are about 5,000 nationwide and approximately 30 of those are nationally recognized and draw students from all over Indonesia.
By tradition Pesantren heads (Kiayi) are political leaders of their communities as well as religious leaders, and they have deliberately created strong networks between their schools. Large Pesantren often directly influence the populations in places where their "satellite" Pesantren are located. Several Kiayi have gone on to become regional governors. Our goal is to help them gain the experience, skills and means to achieve a vision of more inclusive community leadership, including leadership in their schools, and a vision of a more civil and secular approach to education.

Most Kiayi in Indonesia do not adhere to fundamentalist Islam. However, because of the closed nature of Pesantren and their limited exposure to outside ideas, the schools are highly susceptible to fundamentalist influences. In addition, Pesantren have become an even more important institution in Indonesia since the economic situation has worsened. As public schools shut down, more parents than ever are turning to Pesantren for their children's education, increasing their influence in communities and the nation.

This Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) project has brought 25 Kiayi to the U.S. to visit public, private and parochial schools and community groups and governments to look at democratic leadership and educational norms in action. Kiayi were trained in participatory democracy, civic education, human rights, secular curriculum development, and school administration. After their return to Indonesia, the Kiayi worked with an Indonesian democracy non-governmental organization to propose projects to increase community participation in their Pesantren. Each project was funded through a second HRDF project. The group will participate in follow-up workshops over the next year, to learn from one another's projects.

BURMA

The United States' human rights and democracy strategy for Burma advocates respect for human rights and rapid political change. We have worked with like-minded countries to maintain maximum international pressure on Burma, pending reform. That pressure includes continued trade, investment, and travel sanctions; the denial of any form of aid, with the exceptions of humanitarian assistance and support for democratic movements opposed to the current dictatorship; continued public criticism of Burma; and outreach programs focused on democratic values, human rights, and good governance. It also includes support for international efforts to foster change in Burma, through the missions of UN Special Envoy Razali and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Pinheiro, as well as the efforts of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other international organizations.

In coordination with the European Union (EU) and other states, the United States has imposed numerous sanctions on Burma. These include an arms embargo; a ban on all new U.S. investment in Burma; the suspension of all bilateral aid, including counternarcotics assistance; the withdrawal of Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) privileges; the denial of Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and EXIMBANK programs; visa restrictions on Burma's senior government officials; and a hold on all new lending or grant programs by the international financial institutions. We have also maintained our representation in Burma at the Chargé d'Affaires level since 1990.

Burma continues to be hostile to all forms of political opposition. The U.S. has encouraged UN efforts to free the approximately 1,300 political detainees. This effort has resulted in the release of over 500 political prisoners and the re-opening of opposition political party offices. Aung San Suu Kyi was also released from house arrest. U.S. officials have also personally interviewed victims of political violence during travels throughout Burma and facilitated access for other such U.S. investigations into human rights abuses. Furthermore, the USG maintains frequent contacts with influential members of the political opposition regarding initiatives that will affect the struggle for democracy in Burma.

The U.S. Government promoted the rule of law and democracy by providing exchange programs and information on protection of human rights and civic education. In 2002, the U.S. dedicated over $200,000 to speaker programs, exchange programs, publications and other information outreach. Furthermore, the USG's direct teaching program offered tuition waivers worth $8,000 to 33 students denied the opportunity to study because of their political beliefs. In addition, we provided $4.0 million in support of the Burmese democratic opposition in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002. These funds are programmed through the National Endowment for Democracy and others and focus on democracy and capacity-building activities and for the collection and dissemination of information on democracy and human rights.

The U.S. urged the Burmese regime, which has not allowed domestic human rights groups to function independently and is hostile to outside scrutiny of their human rights record, to accept visits by international human rights organizations. Amnesty International completed its first visit to Burma in 2003.

When the Burmese government categorically denied that its soldiers had been involved in any of the rapes they were accused of committing, the U.S. investigated, called the Government to account at a public press conference, and continued to press for an international investigation of the charges, posting U.S. findings on the Department of State's website.

PHOTO: IFES

The U.S. has co-sponsored annual resolutions at the U.N. General Assembly and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights that highlight and draw international attention to the continued human rights violations in Burma.

Throughout the year, the U.S. continued to encourage the Government to allow workers' rights, unions, and discontinue its use of forced labor. We supported the establishment of a liaison office of the ILO in Burma, which was eventually permitted by the Government, and which made efforts to bring the Government into compliance with its international labor obligations.

CAMBODIA

The promotion of democracy and good governance and continued improvement of human rights are two of the United States' main foreign policy objectives in Cambodia. Cambodia's human rights record remains poor, although there have been improvements in some areas. Official corruption, a flawed judicial system, and a culture of impunity have exacerbated the situation.

U.S. officials collaborated closely with civil society, international organizations, government officials, and international and local human rights NGOs in monitoring and advocating better respect of human rights and in developing and implementing U.S. Government-funded programs in support of these aims.

The U.S. has supported for several years activities of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-CAM), an organization that investigates and documents the crimes against humanity committed by the former Khmer Rouge regime.

Through The Asia Foundation (TAF), the U.S. supported a number of local NGO partners in investigating hundreds of alleged abuses of human rights and provided directed intervention and legal services and other assistance to over 100,000 individuals. One such NGO provided public defender services to over 95% of the courts in Cambodia, while another monitored prisons and uncovered and continued to investigate alleged baby selling for foreign adoption. Other NGOs advocated new criminal and civil codes, monitored and assessed the activities of the legislative branch, contributed

to the drafting of scores of new laws providing greater human rights protections, and educated thousands of local officials on good governance, rule of law and due process.

Again through TAF, the U.S. supported local NGOs' efforts to promote democratic institutions, engage electoral authorities to promulgate fewer inconsistent and contradictory regulations and create a more level electoral playing field, and promote equal media access for political parties contesting national elections. One grant will establish and support 22 Internet-enabled community information centers throughout the country to assist in monitoring, investigating and reporting of hu-man rights cases throughout the country. In early 2002, the U.S. and local NGOs effectively advocated the removal of regulations that would have resulted in censorship of voter education material in local elections held in February 2002. Consequently, NGO partners conducted thousands of village-level voter education meetings and drama performances, distributed 700,000 copies of a non-partisan voter guide, and broadcast a series of vo-ter education announcements on radio and television. TAF's technical assistance and capacity-building of Cambodia's local election monitoring organizations resulted in the deployment of more than 33,000 domestic observers at 12,400 polling stations during the Commune Council elections. Our NGO grantees, including the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), provided further support for monitoring, post-election assessments, good governance training for elec-ted officials, and advocacy programs for civil society and civic education programs.

The U.S. Government also funded an American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) project that provided union leader training and legal aid to more than 300 garment union leaders and activists in the principles of union building. We played a key role in drafting and ensuring the implementation of new regulations that provided greater protections to unions and created Cambodia's first labor arbitration council. Our Embassy intervened and secured the release two union leaders imprisoned for six months on unsubstantiated charges based on inadequate evidence. Grants to the International Labor Organization (ILO) supported monitoring and reporting of working conditions and labor rights in Cambodia's approximately 200 garment factories, the creation of labor dispute resolution mechanisms and institutions, and the eradication of hazardous child labor in the salt, rubber and fishing industries.

PHOTO: IFES

Another U.S. grant to TAF supported NGO activities in the areas of prevention of human trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers. Additional grants to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) supported a mass media anti-trafficking campaign and community network building across all provinces of Cambodia, as well as a long-term recovery and reintegration program for Cambodian trafficking victims returning from Thailand. Our interventions in June 2002 helped convince the government to abandon a policy of prosecuting Vietnamese trafficking victims as illegal immigrants.

CHINA

China's authoritarian Government continues to suppress political, religious, and social groups, as well as individuals, that are perceived to be a threat to regime power or national stability. The U.S. Government employs multiple strategies to promote human rights and strengthen the rule of law in China. U.S. officials routinely highlight publicly the need for improvements in human rights conditions and call for the release of prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Mission in China also work privately with Chinese officials, NGOs, and other organizations to identify areas of particular concern and encourage systemic reforms. Finally, the U.S. supports a wide range of programs designed to improve human rights conditions in China by strengthening the judicial system and furthering the rule of law, encouraging democratic political reform, promoting respect for freedom of religion, protecting human rights, including worker rights and women's rights, improving transparency in governance, and strengthening civil society.

The U.S. Government works continually to secure the release of Chinese prisoners of conscience. The Ambassador and other officials regularly raise specific cases in meetings with Chinese officials. In 2002 and early 2003, the Government of China released a number of high-profile prisoners of conscience who were the subjects of such lobbying. For instance, Tibetan ethnomusicologist Ngawang Choephel; Tibetan Jigme Sangpo, China's longest serving prisoner of conscience; China Democracy Party co-founder Xu Wenli; and political activist Fang Jue were released to the United States. Other prisoners of conscience, including four Tibetan nuns, also gained early release from prison after being highlighted in U.S. appeals.

The United States funds a multi-million dollar program to promote legal reform and encourage judicial independence; to increase popular participation in government; and to foster the development of civil society in China. Under this program, more than a dozen projects are currently under implementation. Some of these projects, for example, focus on strengthening the provision of legal services and enabling average citizens to seek protection under the law. Others promote democratic political reform by encouraging the holding of direct elections at the local level and increasing ways in which citizens can participate in government decision-making. In addition, the Embassy awards small grants to members of China's NGO movement, in support of democratic values.

During the year, U.S. lobbying helped facilitate visits to China by the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom and a member of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Senior officials continue to call upon the Government of China to enter into dialogues with the Vatican and the Dalai Lama; emissaries of the Dalai Lama visited Tibetan areas of China twice in 2002, the first such visits in decades.

The U.S. called for reform of those elements of the Chinese labor code that do not meet international standards. Officials are working to establish programs of technical assistance that could advance worker rights in the areas of labor law and mine safety. Officers of the U.S. Mission in China also work to monitor compliance with the U.S.-China Memorandum of Understanding and Statement of Cooperation on Prison Labor and to investigate allegations of forced child labor.

The U.S. Government engages in an ongoing Human Rights Dialogue with the Government of China. During the December 2002 session, the Government of China agreed to invite, without conditions, the U.N. Special Rapporteurs for Religious Intolerance, Torture, and Education, as well as the Chairman of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, to visit China.

During 2002, the Ambassador and senior officials worked to strengthen the flow of information concerning human rights within the U.S. Government, with the Chinese and with like-minded governments. The U.S. attended the third Bern Process meeting of China's dialogue partners to share information about human rights strategies and human rights, rule of law, and democracy programming. The U.S. Mission in China also brought internationally recognized speakers to address Chinese audiences on topics including democracy, human rights, religious freedom, and rule of law.

FIJI

Fiji's human rights and democracy environment in 2002 was still colored by rule of law concerns, a legacy of the May 2000 coup and hostage-taking in Parliament. The 2002 legacy included ethnically divisive rhetoric from political leaders, ongoing investigations into persons allegedly involved in the May 2000 events, and a government that is not fully complying with Fiji's constitution. The USG concentrated on addressing ethnic divisions in Fiji, aiding its return to full constitutional democracy, establishing and maintaining dialogue with religious groups, and trafficking in persons concerns.

The USG focused on convincing the Government to announce publicly that it would abide by the decision of the Supreme Court on an upcoming Constitutional case on having a multi-party Cabinet — whatever that Court decision might be. Prime Minister Qarase obliged early in the year and continued to hold to that position throughout 2002. This decision will have a great impact on the issues of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in Fiji.

PHOTO:IFES

The USG has close contact with and easy access to all major political parties, from the working level to the very top. When incidents of racial name-calling occurred in Parliament, for example, the USG was able to discuss the matter with the Speaker of Parliament, the de facto leader of the opposition, and leading figures in the government party.

Public diplomacy efforts throughout 2002 focused increasingly on human rights and democracy-related topics. International Visitor Program visitor Esther Williams, for example, has directed the University of the South Pacific's ground-breaking efforts to create meaningful election data from field surveys and grassroots polling conducted by USP ((???)) students during the past two national elections.

The USG undertook a broad range of contacts with religious groups in Fiji in 2002. For example, consular, political and economic officers all called on Muslim leaders during the year, and the Embassy Charge d'Affaires made a point of calling on Muslim League leaders within the first few weeks of his arrival.

The USG continues to search for more and better sources of information regarding trafficking in persons in Fiji. The USG also enjoys close working relations with the major trade unions, academics, legal experts, women's rights advocates, and the major churches in Fiji.

INDONESIA

Indonesia furthered its transition to democracy in 2002 while experiencing continued challenges on the human rights front. The military and police committed widespread violations, including extrajudicial killings and torture, and justice systems all too often failed to hold violators accountable.

USG efforts focused on encouraging military reform and accountability, promoting respect for human rights and developing civil society. We worked to help professionalize the police, fight trafficking and child labor, and foster religious tolerance. Our extensive assistance programs supported free and fair elections, strengthened political parties and civil society, reached out to religious groups and empowered non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in protection of fundamental human rights.

In an aggressive and far-reaching program, USG officials advocated regularly with GOI officials at all levels, monitored court trials of indicted human rights violators and met frequently with victims, NGO workers, women's empowerment groups, students and others. We encouraged accountability for atrocities in East Timor, pressed for greater respect for human rights in the troubled provinces of Aceh and Papua, and urged systemic changes to improve the legal system. We summarized our findings in a comprehensive and thoroughly revised Human Rights Report, an in-depth International Religious Freedom Report and a substantial report on the worst forms of child labor.

At the highest levels, we pursued justice for the August 2002 killings of two American citizens in Papua. At a number of courts, including those under the Ad Hoc Tribunal for Human Rights in East Timor, we monitored trials closely and conferred frequently with human rights lawyers, judges and prosecutors. We encouraged the GOI to establish efficient, accountable and impartial justice-sector procedures. In the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi, where violence between Muslims and Christians had left thousands dead, the USG supported the peace process through advocacy with senior officials and engagement with the affected communities. We made similar efforts in Aceh, where a 25-year-old rebellion has torn the province apart, and Papua, where separatist sentiment has simmered for decades.

The USG promoted reform and respect for human rights within the police and military. The DOJ implemented a Civil Disturbance Management Training project with the police, after which police showed greater restraint in managing crowds. Through our Transition to Democratic Policing project, we encouraged police to be more responsive to the community. Our Expanded International Military Education and Training (E-IMET) program educated civilians in the role of civilian oversight of the military in a democracy. In addition, we met regularly with Indonesian military officials and encouraged military reform.

We helped the Aceh branch of the National Human Rights Commission document killings, beatings, abductions and other severe human rights abuses. USG

support for the Committee for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras), totaling almost half a million dollars, bolstered its campaign against torture and disappearances. In Papua, our assistance to the Institute for Human Rights Studies and Advocacy (ELSHAM) financed investigations into grave human rights violations.

USG programs provided technical assistance to legislation that authorizes the first direct presidential election in Indonesian history. We helped the Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI) make progress toward changing the draft Citizenship Law, which in its earlier form discriminated against Chinese Indonesians. The USG supported efforts by international democracy NGOs to professionalize political parties. We played a key role in setting up Indonesia's Anti-Corruption Commission.

The USG used $180,000 to enable 20 Indonesians - eight of them human rights activists — to participate in a one-month visit to the U.S. focused on human rights. We sent 23 leaders of Islamic boarding schools to the U.S., where they attended workshops on democratic community leadership, project planning and education. We held workshops on press ethics, and lobbied Parliament vigorously against restrictive aspects of the Broadcasting Bill.

The USG conducted a major outreach campaign to Islamic leaders, to bolster our ties with that community and explain U.S. policy. Through a University Affiliations Grant ($125,000) and Fulbright grants (totaling $125,000) to three American lecturers, we also supported Gadjah Mada University's Comparative Religion Graduate Program, which was established with American assistance and is the country's only comparative religion program.

With grants to the ILO, the USG helped combat child labor and generate progress in the footwear and fishing industries. We also worked hard to support actions against trafficking in persons. A $1.9 million grant to the International Catholic Migration Center and the Solidarity Center helped the GOI and local NGOs take crucial steps to address trafficking into prostitution, forced labor and debt bondage, including drafting a counter-trafficking law and adopting a National Action Plan, which prompted police to move against traffickers.

PHOTO:IFES

LAOS

Securing improvements in Laos' human rights situation is a cornerstone of American foreign policy on Laos, and the staff of the U.S. Embassy have been pivotal in cultivating action on the part of the Lao government towards recognizing the human rights of ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and political prisoners. The U.S. Embassy has been very active in investigating human rights abuses in the rural provinces and supporting religious freedom legislation, and regularly press for the release of political and religious minority prisoners.

The U.S. Embassy in Vientiane has been successful at eliciting interest and support from USG agencies in improving the good governance picture in Laos. In 2002, the Embassy organized a visit from the Department of Justice's Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training Program (OPDAT) to survey the governance situation to determine how, and whether, the USG could assist Laos in developing their rule of law. The Embassy has also worked closely with the International Republican Institute (IRI) in establishing a small but groundbreaking program for training local village officials on village election procedures. This program, long in the making, finally took off - and saw an outstanding turn-out - in early 2003.

The Embassy's Public Affairs Office, in coordination with the Lao Ministry of Information and Culture, organized a workshop for young journalists to improve writing skills and to encourage journalistic independence. Two more such workshops are planned in 2003.

Laos has made good use of the International Visitor (IV) Program to send senior Lao officials, including four provincial governors, to the U.S. in order to expose them to U.S. ideas pertaining to human rights and democracy. The Embassy also distributes to about 100 Lao officials a monthly collection of articles on good governance, world standards on human rights, and related subjects.

Allegations of the Lao government's mistreatment of ethnic minorities, particularly the Hmong ethnic group, represent another major human rights concern. This year the U.S. Ambassador made the first-ever visit by an American official to the Saisomboune Special Zone, an area where Hmong exile groups haver reported numerous human rights violations against the native Hmong population, and visited ethnic Hmong groups in other provinces to assess their situation firsthand. These visits gave the Ambassador an opportunity to voice human rights concerns directly to local officials who might be implicated in abuses. The Ambassador also raised the issue of conditions of Laos' ethnic Hmong population on numerous occasions with senior Lao leaders and met with U.S.-based Hmong groups to exchange information.

Conditions in Laos' prisons are reportedly harsh, their prisoners often without or denied adequate food or medical care. Torture is not unknown. The U.S. Ambassador and other Embassy officers raised cases of individual political prisoners in meetings with senior Lao officials. Through its effort to follow the status of

political prisoners, Embassy confirmed the 1999 sentencing and imprisonment of five political protesters who had disappeared at the time of their arrest and whose fate was uncertain. The Ambassador also discussed Laos' prisons with senior leaders, encouraging the Government to grant international monitors access to its prison system, with a view to finding constructive ways of ameliorating the worst conditions in the country's prisons.

Violations of religious freedom are among the most egregious infringements of basic rights in Laos; this issue is a bellwether for other human rights issues, and has been the focus of U.S. Embassy efforts, which have begun to yield results. There are currently four persons known to be imprisoned for their religious belief, as opposed to 25 in mid-2000. There have been no reports of forced renunciations since early 2002, after a wave of hundreds of such reports previously. Our Embassy has received no new reports of church closings since early 2002, and many formerly closed churches have reopened in some parts of the country.

Our Embassy's many efforts contributed to this improvement. Several key American figures in the area of religious freedom visited Laos to investigate the Lao government's treatment of its religious minorities, including a Commissioner from the Commission for International Religious Freedom (CIRF). Other visits by U.S. Department of State officials helped to reinforce our message to the Lao government that the world was watching its behavior. The Embassy worked closely with a human rights NGO, the Institute of Global Engagement (IGE), to arrange travel to the U.S. of senior members of the Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC), the Lao government organ overseeing religious practice, in order to learn about the value of free religious practice. Our Ambassador and other Embassy staff also raised the issue of religious freedom on numerous occasions with senior Lao officials, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and senior Ministers, and made frequent field visits to assess conditions of religious minorities directly.

MALAYSIA

The Malaysian government, informed by an "Asian Values" ideology, openly acknowledges that it restricts certain political and civil rights to maintain social harmony and political stability. An advanced developing country, Malaysia has graduated from direct bilateral economic and developmental assistance, but the USG conducts a range of human rights-related programs and activities. Because the Malaysian government believes that U.S. criticisms of Malaysia's human rights practices are culturally biased and politically motivated, pressing controversial human rights questions directly with official counterparts can be counterproductive. For example, in spite of numerous formal USG requests, the Government has not signed a bilateral law enforcement training agreement because it is unable to accept a provision that signatories "seek to uphold human rights." That said, we continue to raise human rights issues with the

Government, including the conviction and imprisonment of former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (whom we cite as a political prisoner) and the continued detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA) of six members of the political opposition (whom we call political detainees) and the importance of free flowing information to an open and dynamic economy.

The USG maintains intensive communications with political opposition parties, human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society representatives. USG officials meet periodically with Datin Seri Wan Azizah, the President of the opposition National Justice Party and wife of imprisoned former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, to demonstrate the our continued interest in Anwar's fate. Secretary Powell publicly raised U.S. concerns about Anwar during his July 2002 visit, and, during the same visit, another USG official had breakfast with Wan Azizah, Anwar's wife, to underscore this concern. USG officers also met with family members and supporters of the six opposition activists detained under the ISA, and visited a group of opposition sympathizers conducting a hunger strike in protest of the ISA detention of their six colleagues.

To underscore U.S. concern about the conditions of illegal immigrant detention centers, USG officers met with Malaysian government officials, representatives of the Human Rights Commission, International Organizations such as UNHCR, and NGOs that work on migrant worker issues. In response to international pressure and negative publicity on detention center conditions in the wake of the implementation of Malaysia's new immigration law, the government pledged to ensure that camp conditions were satisfactory and to investigate allegations of abuses.

We promoted the rule of law through support for a program to assist Malaysian courts with case management reform and alternative dispute resolution. Our small grant in support of a seminar on judicial accountability helped inform one judge's recent ruling in favor of the rights of Malaysia's aboriginal people.

In support of press freedom, we sponsored visits to the U.S. for several key journalists, who returned with a keen awareness of the challenges and benefits of media free from government control. Recently, when police seized the computers of Malaysia's most independent media outlet, the on-line newspaper Malaysiakini, USG officers reached out to Malaysiakini journalists (a number of whom have been USG grantees) to demonstrate U.S. support for its continued operations.

In seeking to underscore the connection of human rights with indigenous values, the USG sponsored a major seminar on "Islam and Human Rights" that was held in a state controlled by the Islamic opposition party (PAS). The event helped strengthen contacts among the USG, human rights NGOs, and local Islamic groups that have limited communication with outsiders, and highlighted the key human rights values all share. Focusing on the role of different religions, including

Islam, in a changing American landscape and on the shared challenges of multi-religious countries, we also sponsored a conference on "Religious Pluralism in a Democratic Society" that drew large and enthusiastic crowds and garnered prominent media attention.

The USG continues to actively engage the government of Malaysia, political parties, and NGOs to raise awareness of, and to press for concrete steps to combat, trafficking in persons, including by passing legislation and by treating victims as victims rather than as outlaws. We have sent several government officials and bar council members on visits to the U.S. that specifically focus on anti-trafficking activities.

NORTH KOREA

The United States continues to be seriously concerned over North Korea's abysmal human rights record and the ongoing humanitarian crisis faced by the North Korean people. U.S. officials work to raise awareness of the severity of North Korea's human rights abuses and humanitarian issues before the international community and American audiences, as well as to bring these concerns directly to the North Korean regime. The U.S. provides funding to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reporting on human rights conditions in North Korea and is also a primary contributor of food aid. The U.S. is also working to end the involuntary return of North Koreans from China, as these returnees reportedly face serious abuses, including torture.

During talks in Pyongyang in October 2002, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly highlighted U.S. concerns about the deplorable human rights record of the North Korean regime. Also during 2002, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne W. Craner raised awareness of the deplorable human rights conditions inside North Korea through speeches before U.S. audiences and testified before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. The U.S. regularly raises these concerns about North Korea in multilateral fora and bilaterally with other governments. U.S. officials urge other countries to condition their bilateral relations with North Korea on concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvements.

The U.S. has been a significant donor of food aid to North Korea through the World Food Program's annual appeals. On February 25, 2003, Secretary Powell announced an initial donation of 40,000 metric tons of food assistance and stated that the U.S. is prepared to contribute up to 60,000 additional metric tons of food aid this year. The U.S. is particularly concerned that aid workers frequently are denied access to sites where this food was distributed, and thus are unable to verify that the aid consistently reaches its intended recipients. U.S. officials have presented these concerns directly to the North Korean regime. Additional food aid donations will be based on need in North Korea, competing needs elsewhere in the world, and improvements in food aid monitoring in North Korea.

The U.S. Government provided the National Endowment for Democracy with $250,000 for sub-grants to two South Korean NGOs to support monitoring and reporting on human rights conditions in North Korea. Radio Free Asia also provides regular Korean-language broadcasting.

The involuntary return of North Koreans from China to North Korea is a matter of deep concern as these returnees reportedly face serious abuses, including torture. U.S. officials have, on multiple occasions, expressed to the Chinese Government strong objections to any such actions, drawing attention to China's international obligations and pressing the Government to refrain from returning any individual to North Korea against his or her will. Assistant Secretary Craner raised these concerns during the annual U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue held in Beijing in December. In January, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing conveyed serious U.S. concern over reports of recent arrests of over 60 North Koreans who reportedly had been attempting to board ships in Yantai, China, headed for Japan and South Korea. The U.S. consistently urges China to adhere to its international obligations as a signatory to the 1967 Protocol on Refugees and allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assess the needs and status of this vulnerable population. The U.S. has taken up the issue of North Koreans in China with the UNHCR and sought to coordinate our approach with Japan and South Korea in the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG).

The U.S. Government worked to achieve passage for the first time of a resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea during the 59th session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights (CHR). The resolution condemned the North Korean Government for its human rights abuses, including the use of torture and forced labor as well as restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The resolution called on the Government to fulfill its obligations under human rights instruments to which it is a party, invite U.N. special representatives to visit North Korea, and ensure that humanitarian organizations have free access to the country.

VIETNAM

The Government of Vietnam (GVN) continued to repress basic political freedoms including freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, and association; arbitrarily detain its citizens, including detention for peaceful expression of political and religious views; restrict activities of registered and non-registered religious groups; and reportedly committed numerous egregious abuses in the Central Highlands. The USG consulted with GVN authorities at all levels throughout the year on human rights issues, including hosting a U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue on Human Rights. As a result of our effort, the GVN allowed numerous people to depart Vietnam, including over two dozen Montagnard families, a Chinese national who had entered Vietnam illegally, and a prominent actor who had been harassed and detained. Other intervention resulted in improved GVN treatment of some other persons of concern, such as a controversial Hoa Hao monk.

In our Human Rights Dialogue with Vietnam in November 2002 we discussed in detail issues of concern, including political and religious prisoners of concern, political and religious freedom, labor and media freedom, and judicial reform. The response was disappointing, and we informed the GVN during the dialogue that the dialogues need to be more productive to be worthwhile.

For the first time, the USG visited two Vietnamese prisons to investigate conditions. The USG raised persons of concern, including activist Pham Hong Son.

On the topic of grassroots democracy, the USG sponsored Vietnamese visitors to the U.S., and sponsored five provincial workshops, including developing pamphlets and journals on human rights. We provided gender education and women's leadership training in three provinces.

The USG sponsored a group trip to the US on the topic of the media's role in promoting civil society.

We continue to monitor the GVN's restrictive policies regarding religious freedom and have requested numerous times that the GVN release Buddhist, Catholic, and Hoa Hao leaders. Subsequently, the GVN supported medical treatment in Hanoi for Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang, and allowed our Ambassador to visit him there.

USG officers visited religious leaders following government harassment. These visits demonstrated that USG concern for their welfare may have discouraged action against them. For example, after the U.S. Consul General's vehicle circled a station where police held two Mennonite teachers, the teachers were released. Other beneficiaries included Nguyen Dan Que and Nguyen Thanh Giang.

The USG arranged the visits of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom. We also facilitated the visit to the U.S. of GVN religious affairs officials and religious leaders.

The U.S. encouraged the GVN to ratify additional ILO conventions addressing worker rights and recognizing core worker rights. While freedom of association remained a problem, the GVN agreed to a Department of Labor (DOL) program on dispute prevention and resolution for representatives of seventy enterprises. A second DOL program on employment opportunities for people with disabilities reviewed legislation and is improving ten Employment Service Centers. DOL trained GVN agencies to address child labor issues and also introduced policies to prevent discrimination in the workplace against HIV/AIDS positive employees. The USG also sponsored Vietnamese visitors to the U.S. to examine policies for persons with disabilities.

The USG provided approximately $500,000 in anti-trafficking funds to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs opened a shelter for victims who have been repatriated from Cambodian brothels and began expansion of a reception center for victims closer to the Cambodian border. NGOs also

worked with government and civil society organizations to highlight the dangers of trafficking and provided economic alternatives for high-risk groups.

We have witnessed some improvements in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in many European and some Eurasian countries, though serious problems remain in others. Across the region, even in countries where non-governmental and political-opposition groups have been the targets of government repression, civil society continues to develop. In Europe, progress has been made on regional conflicts and refugee/internally displaced persons (IDP) returns. The international community, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United Nations, has played a major role in achieving these results. However, the conflict in Chechnya and associated violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continue, with little meaningful accountability. Progress on other regional conflicts and refugee/IDP returns in Eurasia also remains to be made.

International observers considered 2002 elections in Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia and Albania free and fair, while recent elections in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia have been flawed. Upcoming elections across the region will be important barometers of democratic development. We are urging governments, particularly those in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia, to take adequate measures to assure elections and campaigns that meet OSCE standards.

"The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder. They encourage the peaceful pursuit of a better life."

President Bush
Speech at American Enterprise Institute, February 26, 2003

Other challenges remain, too. The continued involvement of the international community continues to be crucial to overcoming remaining conflict and post-conflict issues and the development of democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Significant rule of law reform is needed to ensure equal protection under the law for all citizens. Media freedom remains a concern throughout much of the Eurasia region. Government efforts to restrict media freedom procedurally, e.g., through denying licenses, through pressure on broadcasting or newspaper management or by harassing journalists is a problem throughout the region. Lack of accountability for the murders of journalists in Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia and opposition figures in Belarus continues. Torture -– a problem in much of Eurasia — remains of particular concern in in Uzbekistan, where we continue to receive reports of death in detention. We are waiting to see progress on recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Violence against religious minorities must be addressed in Georgia, and religious freedom also is limited in several other Eurasian countries. Several key indicted war criminals remain at large in the Balkans.

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U.S. strategy for promoting democracy and human rights employs a combination of consistent, high-level diplomacy and assistance programs. We are funding a range of country-specific and regional projects supporting free media, civil society including human rights groups and independent labor unions, religious freedom, democratic elections, political party development, good governance, the rule of law and anti-trafficking measures. We use bilateral and multilateral channels, primarily the OSCE but also the UN Commission on Human Rights, both to support positive developments and to highlight instances of abuse.

HUMAN RIGHTS NGO RESOURCE CENTERS IN UZBEKISTAN

In Uzbekistan, Freedom House opened the first human rights non-governmental organization (NGO) resource center in Tashkent in October 2002. The center experiences a high volume of human rights defenders using the resources available at the center including computers and Internet access, and local human rights defenders use the center to hold regular meetings and press conferences. Freedom House has received numerous requests to open other resource centers in other parts of the country. Freedom House has begun hosting round table discussions on specific human rights topics, including torture, the death penalty, and the International Helsinki Federation Charter. The U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan has requested that USAID begin a similar program in Kazakhstan.

ALBANIA

The human rights situation in Albania continues to improve, but remains poor in many areas. These problems stem primarily from political instability, a weak judiciary and widespread corruption. To address Albania's human rights and democracy weaknesses, the 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Albania stresses the promotion of democracy and civil society, combating corruption, developing a free and responsible press, providing assistance on police reform, encouraging freedom of religion and assisting victims of human trafficking.

The U.S. Embassy in Tirana worked with civil society groups, the Albanian government and the international community to promote participatory democracy, electoral reform and the development of independent oversight agencies in the Albania government. The Ambassador raised the issue of electoral reform repeatedly with Albanian political leaders, encouraging constructive political dialogue and discouraging efforts to weaken independent government agencies. U.S. assistance programs totaling $7.3 million addressed voter registration, political party building, parliamentary assistance, government decentralization and NGO development. Embassy Democracy Commission grants were directed toward organizations addressing civic education and community development, resulting in elected officials now routinely facing demands of the citizenry.

Corruption continues to be a debilitating force in Albanian democracy. The United States has consistently raised the need to fight corruption in public statements and in meetings with Albanian officials. These efforts were factors in the dismissals and pending prosecutions of several high level political and law enforcement figures, including a deputy minister and several police officials. Several judges have also been dismissed for corruption. Corruption is now recognized as a serious political issue. The U.S. Government supports the Office of the People's Advocate, the Government of

PHOTO: USAID

Albania's ombudsman and a key check on government corruption, through training, collaboration and participation in the international community's "Friends of the People's Advocate" committee. USAID spent $3.375 million to establish the Albanian Coalition Against Corruption and the Citizen's Advisory Office, an NGO offering legal assistance in corruption cases. These programs have produced cooperation between government and civil society. USAID-funded technical assistance and Embassy advocacy also led directly to the drafting and recent passage of a financial disclosure law, which requires an annual declaration of assets from government officials – including members of parliament, police chiefs, military commanders, and directorate heads. Democracy Commission and Department of Justice programs have helped build the capacity of the Albanian National Police's Office of Internal Control, which is working to curb corruption and build a more professional police force, run human rights awareness programs for police, and reduce corruption among prosecutors and judges.

The U.S. Government condemned incidents of press irresponsibility, while closely monitoring reports of press intimidation by politicians. USAID's $1.39 million Professional Media Program is working to provide Internet access for the entire journalism community. The project led to the creation of "Heros of Albania," a television series highlighting citizens' participation in community improvements, as well as a successful investigative journalism training program.

U.S. officials continued to press for the rights of women and minorities. The visit of a prominent Greek-American activist was utilized to highlight the issue of minority rights with the Government of Albania, including treatment of such disenfranchised communities as Roma and Egyptians. The U.S. Government ran programs on the rights of Roma and on education for children with disabilities.

Embassy officials raised the issue of religious intolerance in specific cases with law enforcement officials, leading to effective legal action. The U.S. Government continues to raise the issue of restoration of religious properties seized by the former communist regime.

USAID focused $300,000 on the prevention of human trafficking and on assisting victims of trafficking. In addition to the continuation of a shelter for third country trafficking victims, USAID efforts included creation of a reintegration support network for Albanian victims.

The Embassy organized International Visitors Programs for Government officials involved in the fight against organized crime and corruption.

ARMENIA

Armenia's human rights record is poor. To pursue its 2002-2003 human rights and democracy strategy for Armenia, U.S. officials work with international and domestic human rights groups, as well as with Armenian government agencies, to encourage the Government to guarantee democratic electoral processes, freedom of the media, assembly, and religion, more respect for the rights of prisoners, women, children and persons with disabilities and to reform the judicial process and increase government transparency at all levels. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 totaled approximately $12 million.

The Embassy has used its Democracy Small Grants Program to work with Armenian organizations in the areas of local democracy, media freedom, and awareness of and respect for human rights. The Defense Attache office and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) have provided human rights training, often a problem area, for military and law enforcement officers. The Ambassador and other embassy officers met with government officials to protest detentions without due process of those detained in connection with demonstrations to protest the conduct of the 2003 presidential election. Embassy officers attended the court cases of many detainees to convey U.S. concern at the treatment of the detainees.

Recent elections have not met OSCE standards. Since 2002-03 are election years in Armenia (local in October 2002, presidential in February and March 2003, and legislative in May 2003), the U.S. human rights strategy has focused heavily on the need for fair, open, and transparent elections. USAID has worked with the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to train election observers and proxies, establishing Voter List Advisory Committees (VLACs) to correct and update voter lists, and publish 10,000 copies of the electoral code for use by local election officials, media, and NGOs. The American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) has trained judges on election adjudication. In addition, USAID donated workstations and other office equipment to Territorial Election Commissions (TECs).

In the first round of the presidential elections (February 19) and the second round (March 5), more than 20 Embassy officers and family members worked as part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) monitoring effort, visiting precincts across the country and following the vote count. An even larger number of Embassy staff assisted the OSCE/ODIHR effort as translators and drivers. A similar effort is planned for the legislative elections May 25. For months before and during the presidential campaign, the Ambassador and Embassy officials used press conferences, media interviews, and meetings with presidential candidates (including the President), politicians, and the head of the Central Election Commission (CEC) to press the

need for fair, honest, and transparent voting procedures and vote counting and for timely dissemination of results. This effort won considerable favorable publicity in the Armenian media. The Secretary of State sent a letter to President Kocharian on the need for the presidential election to meet OSCE standards and made the same point to the Armenian Foreign Minister. Following both election rounds, the Department of State issued press statements; the final statement concluded that "Armenia's leadership missed an important opportunity to advance democratization by holding a credible election."

Linked to the human rights focus on elections is an emphasis on professionalism, openness, and equal access in the media, sometimes a significant problem area in Armenia, especially during the pre-election period in 2003. USAID worked with the International Research and Exchanges (IREX) Board/ProMedia to publish election information supplements for insert in newspapers and to conduct training classes on election coverage. A USAID grantee, Internews, organized a seminar for local journalists on election reporting and journalistic ethics, and another grantee helped organize candidate debates. Internews generally assists media outlets to become politically independent, increases citizens' access to unbiased information, and advances a fair legal environment for media. After the independent television station "A-One Plus" lost its frequency, the Embassy demarched the Government on restrictions of press freedom and the Ambassador stressed to Armenian officials the necessity for the opposition to be guaranteed equal access to air time.

USAID supported the Eurasia Foundation in financing a private printing press for newspapers as an alternative to the state-operated facility, and worked with Junior Achievement of Armenia to continue a civic education program in secondary schools. The Embassy continues its effort to establish "Internet classrooms" in Armenian secondary schools to give children access to a broad range of opinions and ideas; by the end of 2002 the program included 120 schools and will be expanded in 2003.

In the area of religious rights, only the Armenian Apostolic Church has the right to proselytize since Armenian law imposes a number of restrictions on all other religious groups. However, both the Government and minority religious groups say that these restrictions are not enforced. The only religious group with restrictions currently being tried in the Armenian courts is the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW). The Embassy has worked closely with local and international JW officials to raise their concerns with the Government about registration problems and prisoners convicted of conscientious objection. The Embassy observes JW trials for proselytizing.

According to JW, as of April 28th, there were 20 prisoners being held for conscientious objections in Armenia. Several had their sentences lengthened upon appeal, and higher courts upheld those sentences. This harsh treatment continues despite Armenia's membership in the Council of Europe (COE), and obligations to which it agreed upon acceding to the COE.

In the area of worker rights, such as collective bargaining and the ratification of ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor, U.S. officials continue to press the Government directly and through international institutions to remedy deficiencies in the enforcement of these rights.

Trafficking in persons has become a growing area for our human rights efforts. With State Department funding, the Embassy is working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and domestic NGOs to establish public awareness programs and to break down prejudice towards victims of trafficking among law enforcement officials and the population in general. The Embassy works with ABA/CEELI to assist the Government to write fair and comprehensive laws covering trafficking in persons. Two International Visitors programs have been reserved to send Government officials and NGO members to the U.S. for training on American anti-trafficking programs and legal structure.

Finally, any account of American aid must mention the efforts of the Peace Corps Volunteers, who have been working in Armenia since 1994. Their efforts on the local scene in the fields of education, awareness of legal rights, and other areas have been enormous, have had a significant local impact, and have won immense and justified gratitude from the Armenian people.

AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan's human rights record remains poor. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Azerbaijan addresses a wide range of critical issues, including respect for human rights and the rule of law, support for democratic processes, civil society, media and religious freedom, and anti-trafficking efforts. U.S. assistance in support of this strategy totaled approximately $8 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002.

State Department and Embassy officials regularly meet with a range of human rights and democracy activists, representatives of pro-reform political parties and religious minorities, as well as with government officials in support of our strategy. A senior Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) official traveled to Azerbaijan in 2002 to reinforce support for our objectives.

In support of freedom of assembly, U.S. officials repeatedly encouraged Azerbaijan officials to peacefully resolve tensions

PHOTO:USAID

with the villagers of Nardaran. Embassy officials also attended the trial of the Nardaran defendants to encourage Azeri authorities to conduct a trial in accordance with international standards.

To promote the rule of law, the U.S. has funded the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) to enhance the professional development of judges and lawyers and to assist them in developing codes of ethics, assist a future bar association in developing and administering a bar exam, expand programs for law students, assist women in gaining better access to justice, and conduct a legal literacy program for the general public.

Recent elections have not met Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards. In advance of an important constitutional referendum and upcoming presidential election, the primary focus of our human rights and democracy effort therefore was advancing democratic political processes. The U.S. maintained an intensive dialogue with government authorities on necessary reforms. The U.S. also worked closely with political parties. For example, the U.S. funded the National Democratic Institute's (NDI's) and the International Republican Institute's (IRI's) activities, which included political party-building and election-monitor training. In the months leading up to the August 24, 2002, referendum on the government's proposed Constitutional amendments, U.S. officials urged Azerbaijani government officials to adopt specific reforms. The Embassy co-sponsored the first-ever nationally televised roundtable debates between government officials and representatives of opposition parties and civil society on the amendments. The Embassy fielded 30 observers to monitor the Constitutional referendum. When serious irregularities marred its conduct, the U.S. raised concerns both with senior Azerbaijani officials, and at the Permanent Council of the OSCE. We urged the Government to put in place effective mechanisms to ensure a fair and impartial electoral process for the future, noting that "reforms are essential for the electoral system and the results it produces to be judged credible by the citizens of Azerbaijan as well as by the international community."

PHOTO:USAID

In preparation for the 2003 presidential election, the Embassy established an Election Strategy Team that includes non-governmental organization (NGO) representation to coordinate the international community's efforts to promote an election that meets OSCE standards. The Ambassador and visiting Department of State officials have urged senior Azerbaijani officials to adopt specific reforms to enhance the fairness and

transparency of the election. The U.S. is funding the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) to provide technical election assistance to the Central Election Commission and the Precinct Election Commissions. The Embassy used Democracy Commission resources to encourage the development of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan. For example, grants enabled local NGOs to host seminars on democracy.

A strong civil society is integral to democracy. The U.S. therefore continues to support the development of civil society in Azerbaijan. For example, in 2002 the U.S. launched a two-year program designed to strengthen the ability of 36 NGOs to effectively represent the interests of a well-defined constituency. Democracy Commission grants have supported a variety of projects ranging from resource centers for NGO development to support for the publication of NGO newsletters. Embassy officers have traveled throughout Azerbaijan to support NGO activities. The Embassy also works closely with the Government to help improve cooperation between the Government and NGOs. In 2002 the Embassy gave the new Ombudsman's office a grant to help her improve the Government's role in resolving complaints about human rights violations.

Another focus of U.S. efforts was the development of a free and responsible media. U.S. funding through the NGO Internews supported the professional development of journalists and advocacy for media rights. U.S funding enabled Internews to produce three weekly television programs, and to provide extensive ongoing technical and programming support to several independent television stations. Democracy Commission grants have supported newspaper production and trained journalists in how to avoid and defend themselves against libel charges. The Ambassador, other Embassy officials, and visiting U.S. officials also repeatedly urged the Government of Azerbaijan to respect media freedom.

The U.S. has worked actively to encourage respect for religious freedom. The Embassy and officials in Washington maintained close connections with the local religious community and met frequently with government officials to stress the importance of respecting religious freedom. Intervention by the Ambassador helped a local religious bookstore obtain permission to import religious books, including Bibles. Embassy and Department officials met with Azerbaijani officials and participated in an OSCE conference on religious freedom that was held in Baku.

The U.S. also has used programs to encourage greater religious tolerance and respect for religious freedom. In spring 2002 the Embassy organized a very successful visit by Imam Hendi of Georgetown University to Azerbaijan, where he spoke about Islam in America. The State Department hosted an International Visitors Program for the chairman of the State Committee for Work with Religious Associations. The Embassy actively spread the message about religious tolerance and Islam in America throughout the year, including at an Iftar dinner hosted by the Ambassador in November. In the fall, embassy officers visited numerous Azerbaijani universities

to talk about religious tolerance and U.S.-Azerbaijani relations, and to distribute literature on the subject.

Trafficking in persons is a problem. The U.S. therefore promoted anti-trafficking measures and effective preventive mechanisms in meetings with Government officials, and through programs that included an anti-trafficking awareness campaign conducted by NGOs. The U.S. partially funded a trafficking research study by the International Organization for Migration. U.S. officials visited the region to discuss the issue, and Azerbaijani officials were invited on international visitors programs on trafficking, and to the Department's anti-trafficking conference in Washington.

BELARUS

The Lukashenko regime's human rights record remains very poor. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Belarus addresses a wide range of critical issues, including respect for human rights, accountability for the disappearance of well-known opposition political figures and a journalist, the rule of law, the development of a democratic political and electoral process, support for civil society, media and religious freedom, worker rights, and anti-trafficking efforts. U.S. assistance in support of this strategy totaled approximately $7.5 million in Fiscal Year 2002.

U.S. Government assistance to the Government of Belarus (GOB) continued to be subject to a policy of "selective engagement," under which no bilateral assistance is provided directly to the GOB. Exceptions to this policy include humanitarian aid and academic exchange programs. Other exceptions for exchanges involving government officials can be made on a case-by-case basis if such exceptions contribute to the U.S. strategy in Belarus.

State Department and Embassy officials regularly meet with a range of human rights and democracy activists, representatives of pro-reform political parties, and religious representatives. U.S. officials advocate for human rights observance and adoption of democratic principles in meetings with government leaders, through press statements, and in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). Embassy officers also attend the trials of human rights activists, journalists and political leaders. Embassy staff regularly monitors demonstrations.

Throughout 2002, the U.S. worked in close cooperation with the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) in Belarus, and pressed hard for the regime to maintain an OSCE presence in the country. The regime effectively shut down the OSCE AMG office by refusing to extend visas for OSCE international staff. In concert with the European Union, the U.S. instituted visa restrictions that convinced the regime to agree to a new OSCE Office in Minsk. The U.S. also encouraged Russia to address the need for political reform in Belarus.

To focus international attention on the disappearances, the U.S. sponsored a resolution on Belarus at this year's Commission on Human Rights (CHR).

The resolution also called attention to other human rights concerns and won approval 23-14-16 on April 17.

The judiciary is not independent. The U.S. therefore continued to provide rule of law assistance in 2002. For example, a staff attorney from the American Bar Association worked with legal experts from a non-governmental organization (NGO) to train 26 attorneys from over 20 legal advice centers on how to represent human rights cases, with special attention to cases of disappearances, in national and international courts.

Recent elections have not met OSCE standards. The U.S. therefore provided training and technical assistance to democratic political parties. USAID's implementing partners on the political process strengthening program worked closely with reform-oriented parties. They conducted training on election campaigning for representatives of a range of pro-democracy parties before the recent local elections. They also began work with Partnership, an organization dedicated to nonpartisan civic education and election monitoring work. The International Visitor Program sent Belarusians to the U.S. in FY 2002 for professional training on the role of election commissions in democracy building and the U.S. political system. In FY 2003, the U.S. organized five International Visitor Programs focusing on elections and democratic political processes.

PHOTO:IFES

Civil society is integral to democracy. The U.S. therefore continued to provide support to Belarusian civil society in 2002, including technical assistance or grants to local NGOs for human rights monitoring and educational programs, and support for youth and women's groups. Grants helped local NGOs and the independent media to explain the principles of democracy, such as election fairness, to Belarusian citizens and mobilized independent opinion and action at the community level. In FY 2003, an International Visitor Program addressed NGO Management.

Restrictions on freedom of the media continue. The U.S. therefore provided support for the development of independent media in 2002. This included technical assistance and grants to independent print and electronic media. In FY 2003, the U.S. organized International Visitor Programs on newspaper distribution, radio station management, and print journalism. Embassy officers also visited independent journalists jailed for doing their jobs.

Prior to passage of a restrictive religion law in 2002, the Embassy met with government officials early in the legislative process to discuss the law's problems and treatment of unpopular religious groups. After the law's passage, Department officers met in Minsk with religious leaders and religious freedom NGO advocates. (Officials of the Government's Religious Affairs Committee refused to meet with the Department officials.) A Department official held a press conference in Minsk; the Department issued a press statement and made a statement at an OSCE meeting decrying the law. In FY 2003, USAID partners hosted a roundtable on the law's legal and constitutional implications and organized a press-club session on religious freedom issues raised by the law.

Restrictions on worker rights continue. The U.S. therefore supported pro-reform labor union activists via a $500,000 grant providing technical assistance and sub-grants to independent union publications, and a FY 2003 International Visitor Program on independent trade unions. The U.S. continues suspension of Belarus' eligibility for Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) because of the regime's failure to accord internationally recognized worker rights.

Trafficking in persons remains a problem. The U.S. therefore promoted anti-trafficking measures through meetings with GOB officials, a $300,000 grant for an anti-trafficking media campaign, meetings with NGOs, international training for experts, a conference for women, and an International Visitor Program.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Since the signing of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Dayton Accords), human rights abuses have diminished. However, the country still needs considerable help recovering from the violence, ethnic strife, and other atrocities that occurred during the war, and in preventing further incidents. It also needs help in creating the structures of a civil society. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) focuses on a wide range of issues, including democracy and

the rule of law; war-related problems such as missing persons, demining, and refugees; ensuring free and fair elections; promoting the free flow of information; and helping to combat trafficking and to assist victims of trafficking in persons.

The legal system in BiH has been unable to protect the rights of either victims or criminal defendants adequately because of its inefficient criminal procedure codes and ineffective trial procedures. Furthermore, the judiciary has been subject to influence by political parties. In order to strengthen the rule of law, the Embassy encouraged passage of legislation that established a BiH State Court, which is empowered to adjudicate claims involving State laws and may include a war crimes chamber to adjudicate cases transferred from the ICTY. The U.S. Government provided funding to help establish this institution — along with $1 million for Criminal Code training, $500,000 for training in Criminal Law, and $200,000 in support for Prosecutors — and provided seconded staff for advisory positions. In addition, the U.S. Government provided $1 million to the Independent Judicial Commission and the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils (HJPCs), which are responsible for restructuring the judiciary at both the State and entity levels. The Embassy also provided $500,000 to the BiH Constitutional Court. Other U.S. Government contributions to the BiH legal system include: $1.5 million to the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program; $700,000 to IRIS (reform of the Administrative Legal System in BiH); and approximately $200,000 to the American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative.

In its efforts to build a civil society, the U.S. Government provided financial support ($386,000) and political support to advance the goals of and improve the effectiveness of the BiH, Federation, and RS Human Rights Ombudsmen, as well as continuing to financially support the BiH Human Rights Chamber ($800,000). As part of its CIVITAS civic education program, the Embassy assisted in developing a democracy and human rights course that is now taught in all secondary schools in the country. Four thousand teachers attended a 5-day seminar on how to teach this course, and the course is included in all teacher-training faculties. The U.S. Government donated $475,000 to this program, as well as 100,000 democracy and human rights textbooks to elementary schools, high schools and universities nationwide.

PHOTO: IFES

Finally, the U.S. Government provided $3.3 million from Support for East European Democracy (SEED) funds to PADCO, Inc, for Northeastern Bosnia Local Government Support Activity; and $555,536 to America's Development Foundation, to enhance the sustainability of BiH NGOs.

The U.S. continued to fund ($2 million) activities of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) in Bosnia, which uses DNA technology, along with other methods, to help identify the remains of missing persons from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

PHOTO: USAID

The U.S. Government also provided $1 million, as well as political support, to the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery Project, where the victims of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre will be buried. The Ambassador is a member of the Executive Board of the Foundation for this project.

The U.S. Government provided over $3.5 million to demining programs in BiH. The assistance went to both commercial and NGO demining operations and included programs for mine victim assistance.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration funded 25 percent of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees budget and 22 percent of the International Committee for the Red Cross budget. In addition, the Embassy sponsored approximately 10 housecleaning projects throughout the country, in which the Ambassador and Embassy staff cleared debris and removed destroyed portions of houses so that they could be reconstructed.

The U.S. Government provided significant financial support for the conduct of the October general elections. Some of the programs funded by the Embassy included voter education and civic organizing programs in rural Bosnian communities ($250,000), ballot production, supporting the get-out-the-vote campaign of the local NGO OTPOR in the Republika Srpkska ($215,680), and publication of a get-out-the-vote letter from the High Representative to all citizens of BiH. Twenty observer teams of Embassy personnel also deployed to polling stations throughout the country on election

day. Partly as a result of the Embassy's work, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election officials reported that the elections were free and fair. The U.S. Government has contributed $584,527 to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs political party and parliamentary development program.

The Embassy conducted a workshop on investigative reporting for radio journalists that covered techniques for reporting on issues of crime, corruption, and official management of public resources. The U.S. Government also funded an International Visitors Program to assist government spokespersons of the BiH Presidency, parliament and various ministries to provide public information and transparency in the institutions they represented.

New legislation has been enacted addressing the legal status of religions and registration procedures in Bosnia. The Embassy is monitoring implementation and religious community acceptance of this new law since religious issues often go hand in hand with ethnic differences and can impact stability

The U.S. funded programs aimed at ending trafficking in persons and providing assistance to trafficking victims. The U.S. Government's contribution to anti-trafficking efforts has been $345,000. Embassy staff from several U.S. law enforcement agencies provided training and support to an interagency task force investigating trafficking and illegal migration. The Embassy provided a grant for a public information campaign and hotline to warn women of the dangers of trafficking.

GEORGIA

Georgia's human rights record remains poor; although there have been a few improvements, serious problems remain. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Georgia addresses a wide range of critical issues, including respect for human rights and the rule of law, democratic elections, broadening public participation in political life, media and religious freedom, and combating trafficking in persons. U.S. assistance in support of this strategy totaled approximately $ 13.5 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002.

Members of the security forces continue to commit serious human rights abuses, including torture or beatings to extract confessions or money. The U.S. is attempting to address this problem through a five-year plan to develop and equip an independent forensic laboratory and train its management and staff as part of an effort to increase the overall effectiveness of law enforcement agencies and decrease the tendency of these agencies to rely on forced confessions. To address pervasive corruption in law enforcement agencies, the U.S. works in conjunction with the European Union to aid Georgian officials in reforming the "power ministries", which include the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of State Security and the Procuracy.

Judicial independence does not yet exist. In order to strengthen the rule of law in Georgia, the U.S. continued to provide

assistance in 2002. This supported judicial reform, ethics training for judges, and administration of judicial qualification exams through Department of Justice and USAID programs. The U.S. supported implementation of the Law on the Bar through the development of a new national bar association, including bar examinations, and assistance in drafting a Code of Ethics for advocates. With U.S. funding, the American Bar Association provided training to judges and the criminal prosecution and defense bar on the provisions and application of a projected new Code of Criminal Procedure. U.S. activities in support of the implementation of a variety of laws including the Law on Freedom of Speech increased civic awareness of legal rights. U.S. programs also enhanced Georgian citizens' knowledge of their rights as well as their access to legal counsel by supporting legal clinics and legal service centers across Georgia.

Georgia's elections have been criticized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other observers. U.S. assistance therefore continued to support the development of a democratic electoral process in Georgia. Such assistance supported efforts to increase voter education and participation by young voters, and assistance to the election administration. The U.S. also supports political party development and candidate training. The Ambassador has been an active participant in the Ambassadorial Working Group on Elections, which has repeatedly encouraged the highest levels of the Government to ensure elections that meet OSCE standards. The Ambassador and his staff also regularly meet with party leaders and non-governmental organization (NGO) observers.

A strong civil society is integral to democracy. The U.S. therefore continued to provide support to Georgia's civil society. For example, the "Citizens Advocate!" program strengthened local NGO and community organizational skills, with an emphasis on expanding the constituency base and developing sustainable financial support. With U.S. assistance, local organizations raised public awareness of governmental and societal roots of corruption and encouraged wider understanding and proper application of the Administrative Code to curtail abuse by government officials.

The U.S. continued to support development of independent media. The U.S. brought four professional media trainers to Georgia for 2-6 weeks each in the areas of radio network management, professional press spokespersons and television newsroom management. The U.S. brought a Georgian state television crew and print journalist to the U.S. to enhance reporting on freedom of religion, human rights and the global war on terrorism. The U.S. supported a program to improve media professionalism and financial viability. The program supported training for print and broadcast media, including basic business management skills. It also supported improvements in Georgia's regulatory and legal framework to allow independent media to operate with fewer impediments.

In the United States, perhaps the highest profile issue concerning Georgia has been the Georgian government's continued failure to curb discrimination, harass-

ment, and violence toward religious minorities and secular religious freedom advocates. Our Embassy in Tbilisi has met many times with Georgian officials to protest such violence, as have senior Department officials in their conversations with the highest levels of the Georgian government. The Department of State sent an officer to meet with government officials and members of the faith-based and human rights advocacy communities, and to promote accountability for violence against religious minorities. The human rights officer from Embassy Tbilisi has been attending the trial of one of the primary perpetrators of such violence. Embassy officials have frequent meetings with members of religious minorities and human rights advocacy groups. A Georgian recipient of a U.S. grant organized a conference for religious leaders seeking to promote tolerance, freedom of religion and peace in the Caucasus. International Visitor Programs brought together several members of the Government of Georgia, NGOs, religious communities and academia to focus on the issues of religious tolerance.

Georgia is both a source and transit country for trafficked persons. The U.S. therefore promoted anti-trafficking measures in meetings with government officials and through an International Visitor Program. Supported by the U.S., the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative participated in a working group to draft new anti-trafficking amendments to the Criminal Code. Parliament began consideration of these

PHOTO:DRL

amendments in spring of 2003. The Embassy regularly meets with NGOs active on the issue.

KAZAKHSTAN

In 2002 and early 2003 the U.S. Government focused its human rights and democracy strategy on countering the Government of Kazakhstan's clampdown on the independent media and political expression as well as on continuing the long-term goal of building an active civil society. Efforts to promote human rights and democracy efforts included repeated demarches to the Government of Kazahkstan on cases of human rights abuse and selective prosecution of opposition voices, which included the arrest and conviction of two leading opposition members and the arrest of a prominent independent journalist. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials have also presented concrete proposals to the Government of Kazakhstan on ways to improve Kazakhstan's human rights record. Other efforts included outreach to the human rights community and independent media and assistance programs designed to support independent media, legal reform, local government, political party development and to combat trafficking. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year 2002 totaled approximately $8 million.

The U.S. Government advocated throughout the year for improvements in the country's judicial systems, including prison conditions and the right to a fair public trial. On prison reform, the Embassy conducted one exchange program with prison officials and non-governmental organization (NGO) activists, encouraged government-led human rights training seminars for prison officials, and included this key area in direct small grant support, through two grants to support supplementary educational campaigns among prison guards on the rights of prisoners (over $18,000). By promoting alternatives to confinement such as parole and community service through these programs and public statements, the U.S. played a large role in the passage in December of legislation further humanizing the criminal justice system.

The U.S. Embassy was the only foreign mission to send observers to every day of three politically motivated trials during the year. In conjunction with repeated demarches, the Ambassador raised all three cases at the highest levels of government. The Embassy publicly criticized the process in each case and continued forceful advocacy on behalf of the three convicted individuals, including repeated requests to the Government to monitor the conditions of their confinement.

U.S. officials worked throughout the year to encourage the Government to increase political freedom, which suffered a setback with the passage of restrictive political party legislation. U.S.-funded assistance programs made possible multi-party training workshops for several political parties that focused on organizational, strategic, and message development. This helped each party to produce a multi-year organizational development plan, and also helped educate them on multi-party democracy. This assistance helped counteract the restrictive political party legislation and resulted in many more parties competing for re-registra-

tion than had been expected at the time of the law's passage. In December 2002, the Embassy's Democracy Commission was able to award quickly two grants to NGOs conducting election monitoring and exit polling in parliamentary by-elections that had been called shortly before and took place at the end of that month. These NGOs documented widespread instances of fraud and other voting irregularities, and publicized their findings throughout the country, holding the Central Election Commission accountable for following the law and its own rules.

The long-term goals of the U.S. assistance strategy —building civil society and educating the next generation — continued through the turbulent year and into 2003. A small public affairs grant went to "Dauir" Publishing House to publish 6,675 copies of a civics textbook "Introduction to Civic Education," in both the Russian and Kazakh languages. This project built on USAID programs aimed at students and teachers of civics courses at secondary schools throughout Kazakhstan. These efforts (textbooks, democracy summer camps, debate clubs and student local government days) enabled more than 30,000 young people to learn civic responsibility, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

To promote freedom of speech and show strong support for the activities of independent media in Kazakhstan, the Embassy's Democracy Commission awarded a grant to the media monitoring NGO Adil Soz, to participate in a government-sponsored working group on proposed new media legislation in Astana. Through this approach the Embassy was able to forestall the likelihood that more restrictions to freedom of speech would quickly be enacted. Several exchange programs and USG funding for two media assistance programs enabled journalists to increase their professionalism and media outlets to develop sustainable strategies for financial independence. These approaches, reinforced by messages to the Government by the Ambassador and other senior USG officials, all helped send the message to the Government that a vital independent media must exist.

On religious freedom, the Embassy repeatedly demarched senior government officials on restrictive religious legislation, resulting in the defeat of the bill in the Constitutional Council. The Embassy also supported religious tolerance with appearances and speeches by the Ambassador at events of religious minorities and exchange programs to foster understanding in the Muslim community.

There was also intensive U.S. engagement on the issue of refugee rights. Through repeated demarches by the Ambassador, close coordination with Washington, and cooperation with international organizations, the Government was successfully persuaded to take the unprecedented step of not deporting a prominent dissident back to another country in the former Soviet Union. The U.S. has maintained the pressure to pass implementing legislation, as required by its accession to 1951 Refugee Convention, in order to formalize the Government's international obligation to those fearing persecution.

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

During 2002 and early 2003, the situation of human rights and democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic was mixed at best. Key problems were the politically motivated arrest of a top opposition figure as well as continuing harassment of the independent media and political opposition; a major setback was the killing of five unarmed protesters in March 2002. The U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights was aimed at redressing these issues and included efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, increase observance of human rights, and promote the development of independent media. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 totaled approximately $10 million.

The U.S. Government was highly engaged on rule of law issues, such as arbitrary arrest and excessive use of force. The Embassy raised with the Government objections to the politically motivated nature of the January 5, 2002, arrest of opposition parliamentarian Azimbek Beknazarov. Embassy officials also met with Beknazarov supporters who launched a hunger strike in Bishkek.

Following the shooting deaths of five protesters by security forces on March 17, 2002, in Aksy district, the Ambassador pressed Government officials to ensure that the perpetrators of the shootings be brought to justice and to address causes of civil discontent. Following police harassment and detention of protesters in Bishkek in mid-November, the Embassy released a public statement expressing support for Kyrgyz citizens' constitutional right to freedom of expression. The Ambassador met with the Bishkek mayor to urge respect for citizens' right to hold public meetings.

Through participation in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, Kyrgyz military officers were provided with training that reinforced military reform initiatives aimed at creating a more professional and democratic force.

To promote democracy, the Embassy maintains close contacts with independent and opposition politicians and encourages dialogue between the Government, the opposition, and civil society. The Ambassador and visiting senior U.S. government officials meet frequently with reform-minded parliamentarians and human rights activists to solicit their views. During a visit to Bishkek, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner and the Ambassador were able to meet with imprisoned opposition leader Felix Kulov.

U.S.-funded technical assistance and grants in the areas of civil society, rule of law, and media worked to strengthen democratic culture among citizens and institutions. NGOs who had received USAID-sponsored advocacy training launched a combined advocacy campaign that exerted pressure on the Government to repeal Decree 20. More than 800 NGOs and other civil society actors participated in the campaign. A high school civics textbook developed by U.S. implementing partners was used by approximately 170 schools, and more than 7,500 students participated in a U.S.-sponsored

civic education course. U.S. implementing partners worked with reform-minded parliamentarians and promoted public hearings as a way to elicit citizens' views on new legislation. The U.S. also promoted the use of public hearings at the local government level; in FY 2002, 18 local governments held a total of 42 public hearings. U.S. funding also supported a $550,000 project creating Information Centers for Democracy that provide citizens with access to independent media and infrastructure to host "town-hall" meetings to discuss current political issues.

U.S. officials intervened with Kyrgyz government officials on numerous occasions in support of freedom of the press. The Ambassador met several times with government officials to express objections to the passage in January of "Decree 20," a government regulation that severely restricted all forms of publishing. The decree was cancelled in May 2002. When the independent newspaper Moya Stolitsa was unable to print from January to May because of a dispute with the state-controlled printing house Uchkun, the Ambassador raised this issue several times with the Government. U.S. support for media helped independent media outlets to continue operating.

Following numerous demarches and conversations with Government officials, the Ambassador gained Government agreement to a U.S.-funded project for $800,000 project to establish the country's first independent printing press. The Media Support Center, the umbrella foundation that will open and operate the press as well as sponsor training programs for journalists, was registered with the Ministry of Justice on December 30. The first meeting of the international board took place on May 1, and the newly hired staff has been trained.

The U.S. remained engaged on the issue of freedom of religion. Embassy officials maintained regular contacts with representatives of various religious communities, and the Ambassador hosted an annual Iftar dinner for Muslim leaders.

On numerous occasions, Embassy officials discussed with government officials measures to improve the country's efforts to combat international trafficking in persons. Anti-trafficking was an important component of the U.S. "Information Initiative," and its implementing partner the International Organization for Migration (IOM) worked with the Government to prepare legislation to provide criminal penalties for traffickers.

The Embassy used public diplomacy funds to sponsor International Visitor Programs focused on the issues of trafficking in persons, human rights/conflict prevention, and Islam in America. These programs brought together individuals representing the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious communities, and academia, building connections between participants and enhancing skills they could apply in their own organizations and communities.

The Embassy-based Democracy Commission funded 22 grants to local NGOs in support of independent media outlets, journalism training, civic and legal education in the southern and rural areas, information dissemination, and seminars on trafficking and extremism.

One Democracy Commission grantee organized leadership and critical-thinking training programs in the remote Batken region. In rural Talas Oblast, an NGO grantee established an information resource center on women's and children's issues, land reform, and civic activism.

MACEDONIA, FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF

Working to restore stability and long-term peace to Macedonia in the wake of the 2001 internal conflict, the U.S. Government provided assistance aimed at supporting the peace treaty that ended the conflict, the Ohrid Framework Agreement (FWA), and at supporting the FWA's stipulations granting equal rights for all of Macedonia's citizens. Respect for the human rights of all citizens, but especially ethnic minorities, as well as promoting a strong democracy, was a key component of the strategy. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives began operations in Skopje in October 2001 and disbursed $11 million via 450 grants to support conflict mitigation at the community level throughout Macedonia.

The Ambassador on several occasions delivered demarches to the previous VMRO-DPMNE-led Government of Macedonia condemning police killings. During VMRO-DPMNE's tenure in the governing coalition (until September 2002), both police and the Public Prosecutor continued to inappropriately detain and/or arrest ex-combatants of the 2001 conflict in violation of the amnesty agreement that helped end the conflict and a subsequent amnesty law passed in 2001. On several occasions before the new Government was elected, the Ambassador demarched the Public Prosecutor, who was replaced after elections, and secured the release of persons arrested in violation of the amnesty law. The Government that took power after the September 2002 elections has cooperated more with the international community regarding human rights policy.

The U.S. Government engaged in direct human rights advocacy. In August, the Ambassador led a successful international effort to free five ethnic Macedonians who had been kidnapped by ethnic Albanian radicals. In July, Embassy officials successfully defused an armed standoff near the town of Zelino that threatened to rekindle hostilities. The U.S. also provided $120,000 to the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) to establish a presence in the country and to begin working on the issue of missing persons resulting from the armed conflict of 2001.

The Embassy worked with the Government of Macedonia, with American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and contractors, and with local civil society groups to ensure that the constitutional changes mandated by the FWA passed Parliament and that relevant laws on a variety of human rights issues were subsequently drafted and passed. Among the laws affected by the FWA were several pertaining to decentralization of powers, which put more rights in the hands of citizens. USAID contractors provided expert advice to Macedonia's association of mayors, helping them to lobby for their rights to the central Government drafters of these new laws. Expert advisors funded by USAID

worked via the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative with government drafters to improve the quality of the Ombudsman law — one of the laws affected by the FWA — and ensure that it met international standards. They also advised courts on ways to modernize their activities and laws. USAID provided the Court Modernization Project, which was implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc, with $1.65 million.

U.S. funds supported the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which in September oversaw parliamentary elections that were deemed "free and fair" and were widely considered the best that Macedonia has experienced in its ten-year history as an independent country. The Embassy fielded 40 teams to monitor the elections. USAID funded 12 local NGOs to conduct non-partisan voter education and voter motivation activities. The U.S. gave $635,000 to the International Republican Institute (IRI), which worked with a local NGO to conduct the country's first legitimate exit poll, and gave $860,000 to the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which developed an electoral code of conduct and obtained signatures and a commitment to comply from all political parties. Another USAID-funded local NGO conducted a parallel vote count and election monitoring to boost public confidence in the election outcome. Finally, the U.S. Government provided $800,000 to the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) for an election reform project and $2.5 million to Democratic Alternatives, Inc., for a local government reform project.

A national census, called for in the FWA, was carried out in November. Through USAID, the U.S. Bureau of the Census offered expert assistance to Macedonia's State Statistical Office that helped ensure the most professional and fair census in the state's history. The census enumeration, which met international standards, was accepted by all significant local groups. An accurate census will ensure more democratic elections and less voter fraud.

The U.S. worked to support comprehensive and systematic training to improve the journalistic skills of local media, including efforts to enhance diversity and minority reporting and hiring. Via the International Research Exchanges (IREX) Board, the U.S. Government provided $1 million for a Professional Media Program and $250,000 for children's educational, multi-ethnic television programming. On a parallel track, Embassy officials regularly distributed information on human rights to key contacts in the media, NGOs, think tanks, and other local groups.

The U.S. Government prioritized human rights as a key policy goal in Macedonia. Several important initiatives directly supported a variety of human rights activities, many in association with the Embassy's support for the FWA, but also in relation to support for gender equality and for marginalized minorities such as the Roma. Nearly 70 percent of the Democracy Commission program was dedicated to organizations that actively promote, develop, and enhance human rights. Funding was dispersed nationwide, and rural towns and villages throughout the country received priority.

A Community Self-Help Initiative implemented by the Louis Berger Group received $4.3 million, and a Democracy Network Program implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities received $176,000.

To help improve workers' rights, the U.S. Government provided $500,000 to allow the American Center for International Labor Solidarity to implement a labor union education and outreach program.

U.S. Government anti-trafficking in persons efforts addressed various aspects of the problem. The Department of Justice provided a series of anti-trafficking training sessions that for the first time brought together public prosecutors and police to address common problems. The U.S. worked with the OSCE on additional training, and via the International Organization on Migration assisted in operating a trafficking shelter for victims. The Ambassador successfully lobbied the new Minister of Interior, elected in September, to move quickly to conduct a series of raids against Macedonia's illegal brothels and to arrest traffickers.

MOLDOVA

The Government generally respects the human rights of its citizens; however, there are problems in some areas. The human rights record of the separatist authorities in Transnistria, which the Moldovan government does not control, remains poor. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Moldova focuses on raising awareness of human rights, fostering democratic elections, supporting an emerging civil society, and promoting anti-trafficking measures. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year 2002 totaled approximately $6 million.

Through interactions with local representatives and officials and funding, U.S. officials worked toward improving protection and awareness of human rights in the country. The U.S. Government gave grants for the establishment of a Human Rights Center in Bender, located in the separatist Transnistria region where the human rights situation is worse and the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector weaker than in the rest of Moldova, and to the League for the Defense of Human Rights Center for human rights training, roundtables, seminars, a bulletin, and legal counseling. It also supported Amnesty International Moldova for seminars to raise students' awareness of human rights and promote their participation in public life.

The U.S. Government continues to encourage elections that meet OSCE standards, both diplomatically and programmatically. In order to promote transparency and electoral fairness, the Embassy awarded a Democracy Fund grant to organize training seminars for 70 independent observers to monitor the election for governor of the autonomous Gagauz region in October. The Embassy awarded a discretionary grant to an NGO to organize a conference on "The Electoral Process and Civic Participation," which dealt with issues related to the May 2003 local elections and funded another NGO with a Democracy Fund grant to conduct get-out-the-vote activities and poll worker training. Embassy personnel also

observed the local election in Gagauzia in October 2002 and will participate in the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission in May 2003.

To foster human rights and democracy, the U.S. Government supported efforts to build democratic institutions and accountability in the country. For example, USAID's local government reform program supported transparency and accountability, as well as capacity building, in local government. Public hearings and outreach were integral parts of local strategic planning.

The U.S. Government continued to monitor religious freedom and to report on the recent proposed draft Law on Religion.

Trafficking in persons (TIP) has been a very serious problem in Moldova. This problem has begun to receive greater attention from the Moldovan government. The U.S. has given considerable attention to this problem and obligated $263,922 in FY 2002 to work with Moldovan authorities and NGOs to rehabilitate trafficking victims and prevent trafficking. The Ambassador initiated an ongoing series of coordination meetings between donor countries and intergovernmental organizations, to guarantee that international efforts are effective and non-duplicative. The U.S. Government funded a rehabilitation shelter and other programs for repatriated trafficking victims that provided medical tests and treatment, psychological support, lodging, meals, and parental education and job training. Through a grant to the Center for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women, the Embassy funded an anti-trafficking informational campaign, a hotline for legal and psychological assistance, along with seminars for social workers, prosecutors, police officers, border guards, and customs officials. The Center opened a branch office in Ungheni in July 2002. USAID also completed an anti-trafficking assessment, which led to the design of a new program to prevent trafficking, drawing on the experience of existing job creation programs. To assist women vulnerable to trafficking, the U.S. Government also funded a program to provide women's empowerment courses, crisis hotline assistance, support and training for female entrepreneurs, and job skills training and support.

PHOTO: USAID

PHOTO:Kristen Michener

RUSSIA

To support Russia's development of political, civil, and legal institutions that respect human rights and adhere to democratic procedures, as well as a civil society that encourages tolerance and facilitates the free exchange of ideas, the U.S. is working to:

Promote awareness of and respect for human rights, religious freedom and tolerance in Russia through public and quiet diplomacy as well as direct and indirect support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs); encourage development of a fair and impartial judicial and criminal justice system and fair and professional law enforcement bodies through criminal justice reform, professional training and exchanges; protect citizen's rights by encouraging implementation of the new Code of Criminal Procedure; develop human rights educational programs for the judiciary, military and law enforcement; promote anti-trafficking measures;

Promote an open, transparent, and representative democratic political system in Russia through diplomatic and programmatic support for the formation and development of democratic attitudes, processes and institutions, including parties, citizens' organizations, and governmental institutions; and

Promote the development and functioning of a vibrant civil society, including an independent and diverse press and electronic media, widespread access to the Internet, independent citizens' groups, and labor unions.

U.S. assistance in support of this strategy totaled approximately $40 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002.

The conflict in Chechnya remains the gravest human rights issue for Russia. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials regularly express concern and continue their dialogue with Russian political and military leaders and Russian and American NGOs, on the conduct of the Russian military in Chechnya. In this connection, U.S. officials have stressed that human rights violations committed by Russian forces in Chechnya need to be curtailed and abusers held accountable, and that the broader conflict in Chechnya cannot be resolved militarily and instead requires a political solution. For example, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky raised Chechnya human rights concerns with Deputy Foreign Minister Fedotov, and the Ambassador and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs raised concerns with Presidential aide Yastrzhembskiy this year. To convey our continuing concern, the U.S. voted for the

EU resolution on Chechnya at the 2003 U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The U.S. pressed the Russians, who did not agree, to extend the mandate of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Chechnya — including its human rights monitoring function –- at the end of 2002. The U.S., in calling for an end to terrorist acts and violence against civilians, has called on the Chechen leadership to repudiate terrorism in word and deed and to cut all ties to Chechen and international terrorists.

The U.S. has supported human rights through a variety of technical assistance projects. For example, in FYs 2002 and 2003, the U.S. supported efforts by Russian human rights activists to build demand for respect for human rights. The project is funding the collection of data on Russian citizens' attitudes towards democratic practices, a variety of human rights, and various aspects of the war in Chechnya. The project is also funding the training of human rights activists in the use of data and other social marketing techniques in order to mount public awareness campaigns in the regions on human rights. U.S. FY 2003 programs support an increase in the role and capacity of regional NGOs and human rights ombudsmen and commissions.

The U.S. provided expert advice to legislators, prosecutors, judicial and law enforcement officials to facilitate the development and functioning of a modern, independent judiciary and a fair, impartial criminal justice system and provided training and exchange opportunities in FY 2002. The Embassy continues to monitor and assist in the implementation of the new Criminal Procedure Code. The 2001 Criminal Procedure Code is turning the rights promised in Russia's constitution into practical law, with arrest and detention authority transferred from prosecutor to courts on July 1, 2002, and the defense placed on equal footing with the state. Phased implementation of the new Code was supported by U.S.-funded expert advice and logistical assistance, and training for judges, prosecutors, attorneys, law enforcement officials, legislators, and the remaining 80 regions preparing for jury trials.

Through participation in International Military Education and Training (IMET), Russian military and law enforcement personnel were provided with training to observe the rights of citizens by adhering to the new Code of Criminal Procedure and in human rights awareness. The Russian Leadership/Open World Program expands ties in part between the Russian judiciary, procuracy and defense bar and their U.S. counterparts.

USAID implementing partners are training local electoral officials and party poll watchers for the upcoming 2003 Duma and 2004 presidential elections. The U.S. supports and closely coordinates with U.S. NGOs, such as the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, that are engaged in training and other development activities with Russian political parties and citizens groups.

A strong civil society is integral to democracy. To assist Russia's civil society, the U.S. supports thousands of NGOs through NGO Resource Centers, direct grants and technical assistance.

The U.S. has been concerned by continued government pressure on the independent media, an important component of civil society. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials have raised concerns about press freedom with Russian government officials on several occasions. U.S. programs provide training and exchange opportunities to professional journalists and students, and have expanded public access Internet sites.

The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials maintain a dialogue on ongoing concerns about freedom of religion and belief, and on religious and ethnic tolerance, with Russian government officials, religious denominations, and NGOs that promote religious freedom and ethnic tolerance. The Ambassador and DCM have been actively engaged on these issues, highlighting USG concerns about religious freedom, hosting a series of lunches and receptions, and encouraging GOR officials to meet with visiting delegations. The Embassy actively supported the visit of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, securing ministerial-level meetings for the Commission delegation and facilitating public and media outreach opportunities. The U.S. continues to monitor crucial court cases and visa issues affecting religious workers. An International Visitor (IV) Program focused on Islam in America. U.S. officials co-chaired a May 2002 Roundtable on Religious Freedom in Russia and Eurasia on the Hill.

To address worker rights concerns, the U.S. supports NGOs active on these issues through the Solidarity Center, includes trade union and labor officials in IV and other exchange programs, and the Embassy engages in dialogue with the Russian government on implementation of new Labor Code. When Russian officials denied the Solidarity Center's long-time Russia director reentry to the country in December, senior U.S. officials including the Ambassador raised her case with their Russian counterparts, and continued to seek her re-entry in 2003.

Trafficking in persons is a serious problem for Russia. U.S. officials have raised this issue with their Russian counterparts, and the U.S. obligated over $3 million in FY 2002 in support of anti-trafficking projects. These projects targeted prevention, law enforcement and victim assistance. The U.S. also assisted the DUMA legislative working group in its efforts to draft comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation. The U.S. supports organizations devoted to the prevention of domestic violence, a major problem in Russia.

TAJIKISTAN

During 2002 and early 2003, the U.S. Government sought to take advantage of the improved regional security situation by working with the Government of Tajikistan, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to address a wide range of human rights concerns in the country. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Tajikistan focuses on law enforcement and judicial reform; development, training, and registration of

opposition political parties; and promotion of non-governmental organization (NGO) development and registration. In addition, U.S. officials encouraged increasing media and religious freedom through legislative reform and licensing of independent media and registering religious communities. They also cooperated with the Tajik Government to address trafficking in persons and to prevent deportation of refugees. U.S. democracy assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 totaled approximately $5.4 million.

The U.S. Government advocated throughout the year for improvements in the country's law enforcement and judicial systems, including prisons. Embassy officials increased engagement with the Interior and Justice Ministries and distributed materials on international human rights norms. The Embassy launched several bilateral assistance programs in the areas of nonproliferation, military-to-military assistance, and law enforcement. At year's end, U.S. officials secured Government approval of a Letter of Agreement on International Law Enforcement and Narcotics Control assistance, which included binding provisions regarding accountability for gross violators of human rights and was signed in January 2003.

U.S. officials worked throughout the year to encourage the Government to increase political freedom. Following U.S. engagement, the Ministry of Justice registered a new opposition party at year's end, the first since 1999. Embassy representatives met regularly with the leadership of all political parties to urge them to participate fully in the political process while embracing democratic ideals and sent monitors to observe several parliamentary by-elections during the year. In December, Parliament held its first-ever public hearing on a bill, following advocacy and liaison work by the U.S.-funded Dushanbe office of the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI). The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), whose Tajikistan operations are also U.S.-funded, carried out training sessions for political parties and televised debates as well as a national conference in October on international electoral standards that included participants from the parliamentary leadership, the President's office, the Central Election Commission, and political parties. The U.S. Government urged the President to be more proactive in fostering public awareness and more responsive to citizens' requests and problems, such as through the visits of four mayors and deputy mayors to the U.S. as part of an International Visitors Program on local public administration.

In December 2002 President Rahmonov visited the U.S. and signed a joint statement with President Bush committing to cooperation on economic and political reform in Tajikistan, with the aim of more fully integrating it into the global economy and raising the standard of living and respect for human rights. During this visit Secretary Powell pressed President Rahmonov for further economic and political reforms.

The U.S. supported a wide range of initiatives to encourage the development of civil society. U.S. officials encouraged the simplification of the registration process

for NGOs, and the Ministry of Justice announced several measures in this vein. In June 2002, the Government worked with Counterpart International's USAID-funded Civil Society Support Initiative to organize a conference recognizing the efforts of NGOs in Tajikistan. The Embassy-administered Democracy Commission Small Grants Program supported a number of NGO projects aimed at fostering dialogue among different segments of society and improving women's status in society, among other goals. U.S. funding supported the opening of an ABA/CEELI office in the northern city of Khojand to provide legal support services.

U.S. officials, including the Ambassador and a visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, urged the Government to increase media freedom through reform of the national media law and licensing of independent media outlets. They urged the Government to reverse an earlier decision to deny a license to Dushanbe's first independent radio station, which subsequently was licensed along with two other independent stations. The U.S. provided material assistance to the first station for a generator to combat electrical shortages common in Tajikistan. Other media projects supported through Democracy Commission Small Grants include the foundation of an independent newspaper and the purchase of computer equipment for a journalists' Internet access center. The Embassy also sent a total of nine journalists to the U.S. on International Visitors Programs. The U.S. Government funded the Tajikistan operations of the Internews Network, which provided technical and professional training to independent journalists as well as legal support.

The U.S. Government worked throughout the year to encourage religious tolerance and freedom, including regular consultations with the head of the State Committee on Religious Affairs (SCRA). Embassy officials urged the Government to complete its investigation into the murder of two Dushanbe Baha'is in 2001 and another Baha'i in 1999; the Government filed charges in these cases in November. The Embassy worked with Baha'i representatives in Northern Tajikistan and the SCRA to resolve the Baha'i community's local registration problems, after which the SCRA intervened to secure the registration. The U.S. Government also supported religious tolerance through an International Visitors Program that sent six prominent representatives from different faiths to the U.S., where among other places they met with officials from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom.

Following the country's designation as having a significant problem with regard to trafficking in persons (TIP), the U.S. Government worked with Tajik officials and international organizations to develop a plan of action to address the problem, which contributed to the country's ratification during the year of the UN Convention on Transnational and Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and to the creation of an interagency commission and an expert working group on anti-TIP efforts and legislation. After consultations with

the Ambassador, the President raised the TIP issue at several all-Government meetings, designating it a high-priority issue. Following these steps, international organizations and international and domestic NGOs working on the issue noted an increased level of cooperation in this area, including the first TIP-related prosecutions and convictions in the country.

Embassy officials demarched the Government on several occasions following the deportation of Afghan refugees, in one case coordinating a multilateral demarche by eight embassies and international organizations in Dushanbe. Embassy officials worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to encourage the Government to prevent deportations and resume Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedures to address the documentation problems that were generally the root cause of the deportations. The Government resumed RSD procedures in July and by year's end had completed the process, with some cases still pending based on court appeals.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan's human rights record remains extremely poor; the human rights situation significantly deteriorated after an armed attack against President Niyazov's motorcade on November 25. The Government's unwillingness to engage on human rights or democracy issues undermined efforts to pursue macro-level reform initiatives. Because avenues for macro-level reform are limited by the Government, the U.S. has primarily focused on grassroots efforts to promote human rights and democracy, working to inculcate future civil society, political and business leaders with universal human rights and democratic values. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 totaled approximately $2.4 million.

The Embassy played a critical human rights outreach role during the particularly difficult period of November-December 2002. Embassy officers maintained contact with families of those implicated in the November attack, who were themselves targets of harassment by the Government, and maintained a detailed record of violations committed by government authorities. The Ambassador and other Embassy officers regularly raised concerns about abuses committed by government authorities, including frequent and forceful interventions with President Niyazov and the Foreign Minister. The Embassy also worked closely with other missions and the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on these issues. The Ambassador worked closely with the UN leadership, OSCE Chairman-in-Office and other senior officials to craft a unified message on human rights. She has used media such as Radio Liberty to underscore U.S. support for democratic norms. Active U.S. intervention helped win the release of a civil society activist in April. U.S. leadership on human rights issues led to passage of an unprecedented resolution criticizing Turkmenistan at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

The Ambassador has met with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the country and hosted NGOs

and civil society activists in December at the Embassy Residence in honor of International Human Rights Day. Despite a March 2002 commitment from President Niyazov to work with the U.S. Government on the registration and unhindered operation of NGOs, the Government failed to follow through on this priority U.S. goal. Moreover, on the eve of a USAID-supported conference in November 2002 on NGO registration, the Government rescinded permission to hold the event at a local hotel. The conference was instead held at the Embassy and was well attended. USAID has a robust civil society development program focusing on grassroots community development and community advocacy. The Embassy awarded 16 small grants totaling $100,000 in 2002, the third year of its Democracy Funds program. Projects supported by the Democracy Commission focused on civic education, Internet access and free flow of information, community self-help, women's and human rights issues. Civil Society Support Centers have been opened in three of the country's five administrative regions to provide community-based resources.

PHOTO: USAID

Training programs are implemented in the centers to build management capacity and strengthen understanding of the NGO sector's importance. NGOs that advocate and support human rights causes are supported by the initiative. In an effort to prevent conflict and extremism, the Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) was started in the Lebap region. Communities are brought together to define common priorities in a participatory, democratic style; the program provides partial funding for small community-based projects that emerge from this process.

Working with young lawyers and law students is an important aspect of promoting basic rights in Turkmenistan. Under the auspices of the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI), a public legal resource center was opened at Turkmenistan State University in 2002 to provide basic legal resource materials for the general public. A legal clinic will be added in the near future, giving students practical experience and providing needed legal services for Turkmen otherwise unable to afford and/or access them. A successful street law initiative was also inaugurated under CEELI auspices in 2002. In November 2002, 20 law students and 10 high school teachers were trained as street law instructors. Law students and secondary school teachers received training on how to educate high school students about their legal rights to help ensure that those rights are respected.

In the interest of fostering independent media, journalists from Turkmenistan participate in a U.S.-sponsored regional

program to train journalists to report on human rights and assist them in disseminating their reporting. The Ambassador held a media roundtable to mark International Press Freedom Day. Access to information sources and the Internet is extremely limited in Turkmenistan. Three Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) sites in the cities of Ashgabat and Dashoguz provide training and free Internet access for all exchange program alumni. IATP sites represent a critical link to the outside world, offering vital access to nonofficial sources of information. In 2002 IATP celebrated the official opening of its second Public Access Center at the National Library in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, which recently registered its 900th registered user. IATP opened a new Public Access Center in Dashoguz later in 2002, in partnership with the British Embassy and the Dashoguz Youth Organization. The center has registered over 100 users since opening.

The U.S. has also sought to broaden avenues of information dissemination, and exchanges and visitor programs remain one of the most effective vehicles to promote human rights and democracy. In 2002 approximately 140 participants traveled to the U.S. on a broad range of academic and exchange programs. In 2002, 17 of 30 International Visitor Program (IVP) participants went to the U.S. on civil society or democracy-related programs; in 2003, plans call for 24 of 30 IVP participants to visit the United States through such programs. The Embassy will also inaugurate a scholarship program for Turkmen to attend the American University in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the Embassy in partnership with the American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS) adopted a plan in 2002 to establish American Corners in three cities in Turkmenistan. The Dashoguz American Corner opened in November 2002, prompting a 37% increase in the number of people applying for the FLEX secondary school exchange program. TEA alumni have held five methodology training seminars at the center for regional teachers, more than 150 prospective students have received information about studying in the U.S., and the Center has been designated an Educational Advising Center.

PHOTO:USAID/CAR

UKRAINE

Despite progress in some areas, Ukraine has had a poor human rights record in recent years. Interference by the authorities in the electoral process, a weak judiciary, and intimidation of the media were areas of concern. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Ukraine increases emphasis on democracy and media freedom, especially in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election. The U.S. strategy addresses these concerns through the promotion of the rule of law, support for free and transparent elections, improved human rights advocacy, as well as freedom of the press and association, and programs addressing the problem of trafficking in persons. The approach to human rights promotion taken by the United States incorporates financial and technical assistance to non-governmental bodies and technical assistance to governmental bodies, diplomatic advocacy, extensive reporting and collaboration with donors and members of the international community. The Ambassador, Embassy officers and senior U.S. officials meet regularly with relevant officials to press for respect of Ukrainian law and the rights of all citizens. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 totaled approximately $19 million.

USAID provided assistance to promote judicial reform, resulting in the passage of the Law on the Judiciary in February 2002. The law paved the way for the restructuring of the court system. A USAID grant provided legal aid and advocacy to citizens and funded a case flow management system in two local courts and one oblast court to address the backlog of cases.

U.S. officials raise the importance of human rights in conversations with Ukrainian officials at all levels. This includes the importance of holding elections that meet standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). High-level U.S. Government officials and public figures traveled to Ukraine last year to stress the importance of democratic parliamentary elections, freedom of speech and association, and civil society.

USAID, the Embassy, and United States Government partners work extensively with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Rada (parliament) members, and the election administrators at the national and local levels on long and short-term elections monitoring, voter information, and development of sound election laws and administration. With USAID support, Ukraine benefited from first ever civic, long-term pre-election monitoring. Without these programs, it is unlikely that the international community would have noted improvements in successive national elections. We also financed exit polling during recent elections, which greatly helped verify the outcome of the balloting. Senior Embassy and Department officials have continued to repeatedly raise the issue of registration of International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) projects supporting political party development at all levels of the Government.

Through the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program and the Media Development Fund, the Embassy has helped establish a network of NGOs that advocate human rights and media freedoms. The Embassy provided 45 grants to organizations that monitor and report on human rights abuses, monitor elections, and help develop the NGO sector. In addition, 14 elections monitoring projects and 121 NGO sector development projects balanced out these programs that have created an independent voice for citizens. Embassy officers have also participated in human rights training seminars for military officers.

The Embassy has been a vocal proponent of freedom of speech. In response to government attempts to control media reporting, the Embassy worked with other members of the international community, including the OSCE, to press the Government to abide by its international obligations. Senior U.S. officials continued to stress the importance of conducting a thorough and transparent investigation into the murder of independent journalists such as Heorhiy Gongadze, and sent a team of FBI experts in homicide investigations to try to assist Ukrainian officials in advancing the investigation.

Unfortunately, Ukrainian law enforcement officials asserted that Ukrainian law prohibits sharing any information that is not in the public domain and said they were unable to discuss any aspects of the case, share evidence or conduct a joint site investigation. USAID and Media Development Fund grants are tailored to assist and develop independent media to become financially sustainable and report balanced news. USAID also funds legal assistance programs for media outlets.

The U.S. provided extensive grants and training to civil society organizations (CSOs) in an effort to foster civic activism and promote freedom of association. During 2002, USAID funding provided over 150 grants. With USG help, over 1,000 journalists received training and legal aid over the past year. Consequently, fledgling industry associations have emerged as strong advocates of free speech. A network of U.S.-supported pro bono legal clinics protected citizens' rights. More than 3,500 clients received assistance by the end of 2002, a 20 percent increase over 2001.

Religious freedom continues to improve, but some registration difficulties and property restitution issues remain. The U.S. has actively worked with the Government of Ukraine to protect religious sites that were neglected or mistreated during the Soviet era. We have also actively encouraged the Government to return properties and religious edifices to the respective communities and will continue to encourage the Ukrainian government to pursue its ongoing efforts to return properties to all religious communities.

Eliminating trafficking in persons and assisting victims are a priority. USAID and the Embassy have hosted international conferences that have raised awareness about the problem. The U.S. funds a number of well-respected organizations that assist victims of trafficking and work to prevent trafficking through educational programs and information hotlines. We also financed a variety of domestic violence and anti-trafficking programs. Over 52,000 people have consulted the various hotlines to date. In part due to U.S.

efforts, the Government has increased its collaboration with NGOs in anti-trafficking programs. The Ombudsman has publicly praised the U.S. for its consistent and energetic support of anti-trafficking efforts.

UZBEKISTAN

In 2002 Uzbekistan remained an authoritarian regime where the primary human rights and democracy issues were torture, police corruption, and restrictions on the participation in civil society. Human rights and political reform were addressed through vigorous bilateral dialogue, direct government-to-government human rights training, legal reform assistance, assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), legal aid assistance and active dialogue with human rights activists and opposition figures. U.S. advocacy resulted in a number of positive steps by the Government of Uzbekistan, as well as some improvement in the human rights situation. However, the Government's failure to address openly four deaths in custody in the summer and fall of 2002 and two reported deaths in May 2003 was a significant problem. U.S. government programs to strengthen human rights NGOs achieved remarkable success in 2002. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 totaled approximately $10 million.

The U.S. and the Government of Uzbekistan on March 12, 2002, signed the Declaration of Strategic Partnership, which formalized the close strategic relationship between the U.S. and Uzbekistan that developed following the events of September 11, 2001. As a part of the Declaration, the Government of Uzbekistan explicitly committed itself to institutional political reform, including the observance of human rights and the promotion of political pluralism.

The deepening of U.S.-Uzbek strategic cooperation also brought with it a broadening of relations. The Ambassador and visiting senior U.S. Government officials met, at various times throughout the year, with leading officials from the Uzbek agencies charged with law enforcement issues, including the Ministries of Interior and Justice, Office of the Prosecutor General, and the National Security Service. Human rights and political reform were almost always on the agenda.

In addition, numerous U.S. Senators and Representatives visited during the year. Most met with President Karimov and high-level Uzbek officials. All Congressional delegations raised human rights and political reform, and several delegations met with local human rights activists. The Secretaries of Defense and Treasury and numerous other high-ranking executive branch officials visited. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner visited three times during the year. Many officials, including Secretary of State Powell and President Bush, met in Washington with Uzbek officials and raised these issues. President Bush personally raised his concerns with President Karimov, as did Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Beth Jones.

This intensive and constructive U.S. engagement has been successful in working with the Government of Uzbekistan to bring about positive changes in the human rights situation. U.S. efforts were critical in obtaining the invitation of for the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture, the registration of two human rights groups, and this year's amnesty of political prisoners.

In terms of the problem of widespread torture and human rights abuses by law enforcement personnel, the U.S. provided numerous courses to Uzbek police and security services designed to improve the Government's investigation and prosecution practices, thus lessening its reliance on such dubious forms of evidence as coerced confessions. Additionally, U.S. officials worked actively with the relevant Uzbek executive agencies, judicial authorities and NGOs on judicial reform. These efforts have been designed to create and implement legislation resulting in increased judicial independence and greater respect for human rights norms.

Also in 2002, the U.S. provided $500,000 to the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Legal Initiative (ABA/CEELI) to create a human rights clinical program at Tashkent State Law Institute. The program formally opened in November 2002 and began training law students in the fundamentals of international human rights law and relevant Uzbek law. These students also operate a Human Rights Legal Aid Clinic that began providing free consultations in February.

As part of its efforts to promote democracy and political reform, the Embassy frequently met with both religious and secular opposition figures. The U.S. funded a proposal for $300,000 by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to conduct a program working with opposition groups and civil society groups in order to increase political participation and political pluralism in Uzbekistan. The U.S. also awarded $300,000 to the International Republican Institute (IRI) to carry out complementary political reform work.

In order to strengthen the capacity of human rights groups, the U.S. awarded Freedom House $1.095 million to open offices in Uzbekistan. Freedom House trains human rights defenders and offers resources and a secure meeting place. As a result, the local human rights community has become increasingly effective at coordinating their trial monitoring and other human rights activities. Embassy officials participate in Freedom House's biweekly meetings with local human rights activists. Begun in late 2002, these meetings attract from 15 to 30 participants and provide a highly effective way for embassy officers to hear from representatives of Uzbekistan's increasingly active human rights community. The meetings draw in activists with whom the embassy previously had little contact, as well as those with whom they have had long and close relations.

The U.S. has addressed issues of religious freedom and intolerance by engaging with high-level Uzbek officials and by initiating a number of programs. Embassy Tashkent and officials from Washington have raised on numerous occasions the harassment of minority religions, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and evangelical churches, as well as the imprisonment

and torture of numerous Muslims who have been unfairly accused of extremism. In order to foster greater religious tolerance, the U.S. sponsored a delegation of imams on a religion in America program and is using $2.3 million in supplemental money to fund a university partnership program in religious studies and an exchange program for community leaders to promote interfaith dialogue.

In order to promote women's rights, the U.S. funded a Women's Integrated Legal Literacy Project implemented by Winrock International. Designed to increase public awareness of women's legal rights under both Uzbek and international law, Winrock worked with NGOs and individuals in all regions of Uzbekistan. The program resulted in enhanced NGO advocacy skills and facilitated cooperation between NGOs and local authorities. As of September 30, 2002, 16,805 women and 1,785 men had participated in the program's training sessions.

In 2002, the Embassy's Democracy Commission awarded a total of $166,000 to local NGOs for 28 projects focusing on democratization, human rights, independent press, civil society and other issues the Commission felt served the broader purpose of advancing political reform and human rights. Several of the best known Uzbek human rights groups relied on these funds to compile research, travel within the country, and pay for operating expenses. The first Uzbek NGO solely dedicated to studying the problem of trafficking in persons and to aiding victims received a start up grant.

NEAR EAST

The Middle East has experienced some positive trends towards democratization and human rights protection over the past year. In Qatar, citizens overwhelmingly approved in a referendum a new Constitution that is based on solid democratic principles. Last fall, Morocco concluded its most democratic elections ever, while Bahraini women went to the polls to vote in their first national election. The Sultan of Oman stated that universal suffrage will apply to all citizens 21 years of age and older for next year's national elections. Greater numbers of NGOs have been established throughout the Middle East, and several trade unions have pushed for better labor laws and the privatization of state-owned companies. In some parts of the region, Internet access is increasing, and citizens are beginning to shop freely for ideas in the world marketplace. In some areas, there is progress towards the development of additional Arabic media that would be broadcast widely as alternative information sources to Al-Jazeera. Heavy governmental control over media is slowly being eroded as globalization takes hold.

"...America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance ... America will take the side of brave men and women who advocate these values around the world, including the Islamic world, because we have a greater objective than eliminating threats and containing resentment."

President Bush
State of the Union Speech
January 29, 2002

In the aggregate, these steps towards greater pluralism and respect for fundamental freedoms in Middle Eastern countries may demonstrate a long-term trend towards democratization and human rights protection. The overall status of human rights and democracy in the region, however, remains bleak. High population growth is out-pacing economic growth and job creation. Middle Eastern countries are largely absent from world markets. Many countries in the region still suffer from systemic denials of political freedom. Women cannot vote or be gainfully employed in some countries and some governments severely restrict free speech and the development of NGOs. This combination of economic and political stagnation will breed greater political instability, insecurity and poverty if not tempered. Education has also stagnated in the Middle East, leaving large numbers of illiterate adults, under-educated children, and a work force that lacks the education required to compete successfully in global markets. Many Middle Eastern citizens have also been radicalized by religious education at the expense of secular education in history, civics, economics, reading, writing, math and science. We look forward to the formation of a democratic government in Iraq that can serve as an example in the region.

The U.S. Government continues in its efforts to support greater pluralism, economic growth and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Middle East. The United States is currently sponsoring programs that strengthen the role of independent journalists and trade unions, increase respect for the rule of law, improve election administration processes, and promote a regional dialogue on democracy for members of NGOs and governments. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), announced in December 2002, is a State Department initiative funding assistance in three separate areas relevant to democracy and human rights advancement in the Middle East: (1) economic reform, business investment and private sector development; (2)

education; and, (3) development of civil society, good governance and transparency with increased political participation for men and women. The U.S. Government is also continuing long-standing educational and cultural exchanges with our Middle Eastern partners.

REPORTING FOR HUMANITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

While the world's media brought their real-time sound-bites to bear on the war in Iraq, Internews, through a grant from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), focused its attention on providing Arab journalists invaluable lessons in the role of accuracy, objectivity, and balance in reporting and local media. As part of its on-going series of training Middle-East journalists in responsible reporting, Internews sponsored a four-day workshop in Amman, Jordan, even while the war in Iraq was raging next door. Forty Jordanians, Palestinians, and Saudis –- nearly all women –- took part in the training, which consisted of several instructional sessions. Trainees engaged in the fundamentals of professional journalism, with strong emphasis on basic reporting, interviewing and reporting skills, as well as training in legal issues, critical analysis, freedom of expression, and ethics. Men and women collaborated. Veiled women worked alongside those not wearing veils. Trainees found mentors, and mentors discovered a real hunger for the skills behind responsible, fact-based journalism. This was an inspiring lesson in the kind of investment –- in time, resources, mentoring, and cultural sensitivity –- that can nurture vibrant, pluralistic, and open media in the region.

ALGERIA

Algeria has a history of restricted freedom of expression, pervasive impunity, and a judicial system influenced by the executive — all of which contribute to human rights abuses. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Algeria addresses a wide range of critical issues, including support for fair and transparent elections, disappeared persons, rule of law and legal code reforms, respect for minority rights, and safeguards to press freedom in addition to women's issues. Outreach efforts include programs to enhance political inclusion, government action and responsibility, social integration of women, resolution of the disappeared, and bolstering civil society.

One of the greatest contributors to Algeria's human rights problems is the state of emergency that gives the government broad powers to curtail human rights for security purposes. The U.S. committed itself to maintain a constant human rights dialogue that emphasized the importance of a strong commitment to the rule of law and good governance. The U.S. also supported numerous programs with more than $500,000 in funding during 2002 that provided practical education in human rights to judges, lawyers, mid-level military personnel, and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives. These funds also supported visits by Federal judges to assist in judicial reform.

The United States also worked to provide extensive and non-partisan technical support to the 2002 parliamentary and municipal elections. Related programs under a $800,000 grant to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) were aimed at increasing the responsiveness, effectiveness, and engagement of Algeria's political parties in the electoral process. NDI's programming supported election observation efforts and contributed towards making Algeria's elections free and fair. Election transparency significantly improved from the 1997 electoral period despite low voter turnout; transparency in turn boosted confidence in the process.

Strengthening the role of Algerian women in society is another U.S. priority. Embassy contacts with activist circles involved in women's issues increased, and several meetings and events were hosted by the Ambassador with the goal of bolstering the effectiveness of women's participation in political and civil society. Under the International Visitor Program, we also sent eight Algerians to the U.S. to gain first-hand experience in women's rights, transparent press operations, and the role of women in government.

Through the Embassy, we publicly supported the work and protection of individual human rights defenders in Algeria. The Ambassador and other senior U.S. officials raised human rights related issues — especially the issue of the disappeared, restrictions on political participation and the press, the on-going human rights situation in the Berber-dominated Kabylie province, and the adoption of a new Penal Code — with the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister. U.S. officials met with the National Consultative Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, as well as many NGOs, to gauge the Government of Algeria's progress

towards improving the human rights situation. The United States has also urged the Government of Algeria to establish an open and receptive relationship with international human rights organizations, including UN rapporteurs.

BAHRAIN

Although Bahrain has made great strides recently towards establishing a democratic and civil society, the nation continues to have problems with a judicial system influenced by the executive, impunity of the security forces, some restrictions on freedom of expression, as well as abuse of foreign workers. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Bahrain focuses largely on the establishment of strong political institutions with democratic principles, including the participation of opposition parties and an increase in political participation, as well as the need for a law prohibiting trafficking in persons and more political intervention promoting societal tolerance between the Sunni and Shi'a communities. The U.S. embassy in Bahrain has initiated several projects to promote reform concerning these issues, including projects on political participation, increased assistance to new members of the Government, judicial reform, training for security forces, as well as prevention of trafficking in persons.

Bahrain held its first elections in nearly 30 years in 2002, inaugurating a program of political reform that has brought the country closer to establishing a democratic society. There is universal suffrage in Bahrain; however, the United States has supported efforts to ensure that citizens are actively participating in the Government and making informed voting decisions. The U.S. funded a grant to the National Democratic Institute (NDI), which organized workshops on women's issues, political participation, and organizational training. NDI also trained a local non-governmental organization (NGO) to monitor the elections, which were declared to have been free and fair upon completion. In addition, the U.S. has funded a program run by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) to establish a regional democracy and human rights resource center. Another project is providing training and assistance for newly elected legislators.

The United States has also been actively supporting judicial reform in Bahrain. We funded the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI) to assess the judicial system and assist the Ministry of Justice's efforts to create a more modern and efficient judiciary.

Security forces have historically been permitted to abuse their authority without repercussions, but the United States is addressing this issue and working with the Government of Bahrain to reform the security forces to meet international standards. In anticipation of rioting at the Arab Summit this year, the U.S. sent an Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) team to Bahrain to assess the status of the security forces. The team provided suggestions on how best to train the security forces, including crowd/riot control, seminars for mid- and senior-level officials on operational planning and strategy, police leadership training, and less-than-lethal equipment acquisition and training.

Contingent upon funding being approved, these suggestions will be addressed in an effort to improve the methods of the security forces. In addition to this project, a human rights section has also been established within the Interior Ministry, which is currently drafting guidelines for the security forces in compliance with the UN's 10 international standards for police.

The United States has supported the participation of Bahrainis in International Visitor Programs that encourage political and economic reforms, including programs on trafficking in persons, freedom of the press, training for judges, enhanced economic freedom, and leadership roles for women.

The U.S. has consistently urged the Government to pass legislation prohibiting trafficking in persons. In response, the Government has created a national action strategy to combat the problem and has since begun to implement this strategy. Also, the Embassy established contact with the country's only NGO confronting the trafficking problem, and has set up discussions between this NGO and the government on the topic in order to formulate possible solutions.

EGYPT

Egypt has a history of improper use of State Security Emergency Courts and military courts, torture, and restricted freedom of association, all of which contribute to human rights abuses. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Egypt addresses a wide range of critical issues, including support for a more robust civil society and greater respect for human rights, worker rights, and religious freedom. The United States Embassy conducts intensive public diplomacy on respect for human rights and the need to strengthen democratic institutions.

The Emergency Law, which has been in effect since 1981 and was renewed for another three years in February 2003, continues to restrict many basic rights and is one of the greatest contributors to Egypt's human rights problems. The U.S. committed itself to maintain a constant human rights dialogue that lobbied intensively for the non-renewal of this Law and assurances of a liberal application of Egypt's new non-governmental organization (NGO) law. We also communicated our strong concern over the judicial process that led to the conviction of civil society activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim, who was ultimately fully exonerated by the Court of Cassation in March 2003.

The United States emphasizes the importance of a strong commitment to the rule of law, transparency, and good governance through its U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission. A six-year $32.5 million grants supports strengthening the institutional capacity of local Egyptian NGOS in the areas of internal governance, sound financial management, and advocacy for citizens' interests and participation in civic action. This NGO Service Center is helping citizens to promote the rights of children and those with special needs, obtain documentation essential for voter registration, and help women become important and active members of society.

A separate five-year $17.2 million project focuses on streamlining judicial processes and procedures in two pilot courts while promoting increased efficiency, transparency and accountability. The GOE is committed to replicating this process nationwide in all courts of first instance. The Collaboration for Community Level Services project represents a $5.2 million experimental approach to local government reform aimed at overcoming the problem of over-centralized, non-participatory, and non-transparent government. The project focuses on strengthening the links between government, business, and civil society in order to increase participation, governance, public-private partnerships, and transparency in cooperating communities.

The Embassy's Public Affairs section has conducted a five-year $500,000 civil justice project with the Prosecutor General's office. This program led to the adoption of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation and the expanded use of "criminal writ". The project currently focuses on the adoption of plea-bargaining and the introduction of the concept of a public defender to the legal system. The Embassy has also funded numerous smaller projects through an interagency mechanism with grants totaling $147,000 in 2002. These programs supported the participation of Egyptian NGOs in hearings on Egypt at the UN Commission against Torture in Geneva, a series of inter-faith children's television programs, a conference on the rights of the disabled, and a summer camp designed to introduce Egyptian youth to the concepts of democracy and civic responsibility.

In its support of religious freedom, the Embassy maintains formal contacts with the Office of Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and with leaders of Christian and Muslim religious communities, human rights groups, and other activists. The Ambassador has made public statements supporting interfaith understanding. The Embassy supports development of materials that encourage tolerance, diversity, and understanding of others, in both Arabic and English. USAID funded an Egyptian version of Sesame Street, whose goals include promotion of tolerance, including among different religions. USAID is working with the Supreme Council of Antiquities to promote conservation of cultural antiquities, including Islamic, Christian, and Jewish historical sites. USAID has also funded the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center office in Cairo, which played an active role in supporting worker rights, including training and anti-Child Labor programs.

The International Visitors program has focused on sending participants involved with human rights, good governance, civil society, and women's participation in politics to the U.S. This year two delegations will travel, with a total of 10 activists.

IRAN

Iran has a history of summary executions, disappearances, widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment, reportedly including rape, restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, press, and expression. Women and religious and ethnic minorities also continue to face violence and discrimination. These and many other problems contribute to Iran's

extremely poor human rights record, which deteriorated substantially during 2002 despite ongoing efforts within society to make the Government more accountable for its practices. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Iran centers on requesting that our friends and allies demand concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvement in Iran's destructive policies in human rights and other areas before agreeing to upgrade trade and bilateral relations with Iran.

Although the United States does not maintain diplomatic relations with Iran, the U.S. effort to encourage the Iranian government to stop abusing its citizens' human rights is multi-faceted and ongoing. Additionally, Iran is currently ineligible for assistance from the U.S. Government pursuant to U.S. law. We continually urge other countries to condition their bilateral and trade relations with Iran on significant improvement in the areas of human rights, support for terrorism, obstruction of the Middle East peace process, and development of weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, while making clear our objections to engagement with Iran, we are pushing the European Union (EU) hard to firmly link its implementation of a trade and cooperation agreement with Iran to positive changes in Iran's policies in these areas of concern.

The United States continues to push for resolutions criticizing Iran's human rights policies at the United Nations and other international fora. We have always supported and strongly lobbied for passage of the EU resolutions on Iranian human rights policies at the UN Commission on Human Rights and at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. U.S. Representatives regularly meet with members of various groups suffering human rights abuses in Iran. Their complaints are documented for dissemination to other governments and for inclusion in the annual Country Report on Human Rights for Iran and the Religious Freedom Report. The President and other U.S. officials have highlighted the poor treatment of the Iranian people by their Government on many occasions and will continue to do so.

Secretary Powell designated Iran as a "country of particular concern" for the fourth year in a row, in accordance with guidelines set out in the International Religious Freedom Act. State Department officials have worked with the Swiss Ambassador to Iran, whose embassy represents U.S. interests there, to raise religious freedom concerns about persecution of religious minorities, especially Baha'is.

JORDAN

Jordan has a history of significant restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association, a weak judiciary, and impunity of its security services, all of which contribute to human rights abuses. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Jordan addresses a wide range of critical issues including fair and transparent elections, the rule of law and legal reforms, and labor issues. The United States seeks to promote these human rights issues through direct dialogue with the Jordanian Government, programs aimed at fostering elements of human rights, and reporting on human rights and the status of religious freedom in Jordan.

One of the greatest contributors to Jordan's human rights problems is numerous restrictions placed on citizens' ability to change their government. The U.S. maintained a constant dialogue that emphasized the importance of a strong commitment to the rule of law and good governance. USAID's $4 million in programs during 2002 included efforts to improve the ability of Jordanians to influence public policy. Specific targets were E-government and judicial reform.

The Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section programmed funds in excess of $100,000 for human rights-related programs. Ongoing judicial reform projects involve a visitors exchange program for judges and judicial experts and English-language training of Jordanian judges to broaden the range of information and contacts available to them. Similar efforts are underway for journalists and women's groups. Female political candidates also receive training and volunteers for their campaigns through USG programming. In the area of civic education, we supported the translation of a new textbook that the Ministry of Education plans to use in an upcoming pilot project in Jordanian schools. Finally, the U.S. sponsored a conference for civic education activists from a dozen Arab countries, including Jordan, who have founded "Arab Civitas" or non-governmental organizations aimed at strengthening civic education in schools and universities throughout the Arab world.

The U.S. maintains an ongoing dialogue with key actors in the labor sector including the labor union leaders, International Labor Organization officials, industrial park managers, factory owners, and government representatives. Our primary focus is working within the Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) to encourage all parties to maintain acceptable labor standards for Jordan's growing textile industry. We note that in 2002, labor conditions in the QIZs were generally good and continue to improve.

The Government announced in late 2002 the creation of a new Human Rights Directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it is planning to train diplomats at U.S. institutions of higher education during 2003.

State Department officials in our Embassy and in Washington have raised individual religious freedom cases with the Government of Jordan at the highest levels. The State Department also sponsored a delegation of Jordanian Islamic scholars on a "Religion in the United States" program.

KUWAIT

Kuwait has a history of a government-influenced judiciary, overcrowded prisons, and abuse of detainees by security forces and police. Women and foreigners continue to face violence and discrimination, especially in the judiciary, and the Government restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, association, and the press. Trade unions and workers rights continue to be highly restricted, and the Labor Law does not protect domestic workers. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy is multifaceted, with special emphasis on the continued denial of political rights to Kuwaiti women and worker's rights.

The disenfranchisement of women continues to restrict progress on improving many of their other basic rights and is one of the greatest contributors to Kuwait's human rights problems. The Embassy continues to pursue its diplomatic and public affairs engagements with members of the Government of Kuwait and the general public, seeking to clarify the positions of the various players and raise awareness of the benefit to the country of women's enfranchisement. In this respect, Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, are frequent attendees and speakers at evening gatherings in private homes that are open to members of all political orientations and classes (the "diwaniya" system). Other venues, such as women's groups and professional society meetings with academics, provide ample opportunities to promote awareness and understanding of U.S. values, especially women's rights. U.S. officials also regularly consult with leading women activists and high-level government officials to ensure that our support of the women's right issue continues in a manner appropriate to the Kuwaiti culture.

More than half of Kuwait's total population consists of foreign workers, including a large number of domestic servants and some child laborers who are especially vulnerable to abuse. While foreign workers were permitted to join unions under certain conditions, they were not permitted to vote or run for elective office in the unions. The United States consistently urges the Government of Kuwait to address worker rights, especially of foreigners, ban the employment of minors as camel jockeys, and continue to investigate reports and incidences of trafficking in persons. We also encourage the Government to resolve the legal status of the 74,000 "bidoon" Arabs with residency ties but no documentation of their nationality.

The U.S. funded a $559,000 project from its Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) to establish a regional training academy for non-government organizations on political participation, political party development, women's issues and media, which includes Kuwaiti participants. The United States Middle East Democracy Fund (MEDF) is sponsoring a program to train women activists working to develop and implement an effective strategy for obtaining political rights for women, including the right to vote and run for elected office.

The International Visitors program facilitated the participation of four Kuwaiti women in a regional program entitled "Women As Political Partners" during the fall of 2002. They traveled to the United States during our mid-term elections, and were able to observe grassroots political action, lobbying, and campaigning from a female perspective. The strongly outspoken Kuwaiti free press also continues to be supported by this program.

PHOTO:USAID/Thomas Hartwell

LEBANON

Lebanon has a history of a government-influenced judiciary, overcrowded prisons, arbitrary arrest and detention of government critics, abuse of detainees by security forces and police, and restricted freedoms of assembly, religion, and association. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Lebanon centers on the strengthening civil society, the rule of law, and freedom of the press while combating trafficking in persons.

The lack of political and judicial transparency is one of the greatest contributors to Lebanon's human rights problems. The right of citizens to change their government remains significantly restricted by the lack of complete government control over parts of the country, shortcomings in the electoral system, the flawed 2000 elections, and Syrian influence. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) addresses these issues through $1 million in Transparency and Accountability Grants, $6 million from the Democracy and Governance program, and $200,000 in Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funds that focus on strengthening local government, Parliament and oversight agencies by improving the delivery of services to citizens and municipalities. 544 municipal presidents, vice-presidents, and financial officers from 350 municipalities participated in 13 USAID-sponsored workshops to enhance their administrative and financial capabilities and better develop and train their human resources. USAID also provided 29 grants of up to $25,000 to support the activities of local non-governmental organizations and other civic initiatives that targeted both the private and public sectors in the areas of health, government transactions, professional ethics, and youth awareness.

PHOTO: USAID/Thomas Hartwell

The Embassy utilized part of the Ambassador's Fund to support two programs designed to improve humanitarian conditions in Lebanese Palestinian refugee camps. One project focused on improving access for disabled children attending classes, while the second trained Palestinian women as nurses specializing in women's health issues.

The Embassy's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Working Group also made a concerted effort to impress upon the Government of Lebanon the need to

improve its TIP record. Several programs were devised to aid the government in this endeavor including the establishment of a safehouse for trafficking victims in Lebanon, funded by a $330,000 grant from the Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs' Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP). Meetings between G/TIP and Government officials were also organized to promote TIP awareness and discuss strategies to counter trafficking, along with a roundtable with local media representatives.

The International Visitor Program brought a Lebanese immigration official, an academic, and lawyer from a non-governmental organization to the United States Government's Conference on Sex Trafficking in 2002. Another immigration official has been approved to participate in a TIP-related International Visitor program this summer. The Embassy also sent five Lebanese women to the United States to participate in a special International Visitor Program aimed at expanding women's participation in politics and political reform throughout the region.

The State Department funded the Institute of World Affairs, a Washington-based non-governmental organization (NGO), to run a successful three-year religious reconciliation project for Muslims and Maronite Christians in three villages in Lebanon. The project added a fourth village, has spun off a local NGO, and is being modeled for reconciliation efforts elsewhere in the Middle East.

LIBYA

Libya has a history of summary executions; disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention of persons, many of whom remain incommunicado; widespread use of torture and other degrading treatment; restricted freedoms of speech, assembly, press, and expression; and impunity. The Government controls the judiciary; citizens do not have the right to a fair public trial or to be represented by legal counsel; and the establishment of independent human rights organizations is prohibited. Women and religious and ethnic minorities also continue to face violence and discrimination. These and many other problems contribute to Libya's extremely poor human rights record. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Libya centers on concrete, verifiable, and sustained improvement in Libya's destructive policies.

Although U.S. ties to Libya are at the lowest level consistent with the existence of diplomatic relations, our efforts to encourage the Libyan government to stop abusing its citizens' human rights are multi-faceted and ongoing. Libya is ineligible for assistance from the U.S. Government (USG) pursuant to U.S. law.

The U.S. was key to focusing renewed and increased international attention on Libya's poor human rights record following the African Union's unanimous endorsement of Libya's nomination to chair the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in July 2002. At that time, we began an active dialogue with other UNCHR members to oppose the nomination, citing Libya's poor human rights record and the fact that

Libya has yet to fulfill the relevant United Nations Security Council requirements related to the bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. These requirements include accepting responsibility for the actions of its officials. In response to the resulting international pressure, in September 2002 the Libyan Government released 62 political prisoners and announced that it would no longer hold any political prisoners except those identified as belonging to al-Qaida. Also in September, Saif al-Islam, Qadhafi's son, acknowledged Libya's poor human rights record and appointed for the first time a Secretary for Human Rights. The effectiveness of this new ministry remains to be seen.

In January 2003 the United States took the unprecedented step of calling for a vote in the UNCHR and then voting against Libya's nomination as CHR chair. Although Libya ultimately won the vote, these U.S. efforts focused international attention on the unacceptability of Libya's chairmanship and ensured that future Libyan human rights violations would receive increased international scrutiny.

Representatives of the United States Government regularly met with members of various groups suffering from human rights abuses in Libya. Their complaints are documented for raising with other governments and for inclusion in the annual Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Libya and the International Religious Freedom Report.

MOROCCO

Morocco has a history of arbitrary arrest and detention, and abuse of detainees, all of which contribute to human rights abuses. Overall, the Government generally respects the rights of its citizens in most areas. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Morocco and Western Sahara addresses a wide range of critical issues, including support for fair and transparent elections, rule of law reforms, and women's issues. Outreach efforts continue to target worker's rights, and child trafficking.

Morocco took positive steps towards a more democratic system, holding its first free and fair parliamentary elections in 2002. The United States remains committed to the continued development of democracy in Morocco and supports programs that emphasize the importance of a strong commitment to the rule of law and good governance. We provided over $1 million to a consortium of American non-governmental organizations working with Moroccan non-governmental organization partners to train candidates and political parties, and also to strengthen transparency in the September parliamentary elections (primarily through the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute). The Embassy's Democracy Working Group also programmed $233,000 to support 12 projects that encouraged voter outreach and education and the training of women candidates.

Senior United States Government officials continue to meet with Moroccan parliamentarians and other government officials to encourage further political and

economic reform. In support of this approach, the U.S. funded the Maghreb Forum for Democratic Political Action in February 2003 as part of a $559,000 grant to support the strengthening of political parties throughout the region. Non-governmental organization (NGO) participants from Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and Tunisia discussed political party development and participation, media and women's rights.

U.S. officials regularly met with a range of human rights activists, non-governmental organizations, members of civil society, and Jewish and Berber community leaders to gauge the human rights environment in general, including the level of religious tolerance. The Embassy and Consulate General also promoted constant awareness of the issues of child labor and trafficking in persons through regular meetings with NGOs and government officials. The U.S. funded a project promoting civil-society capacity building for local development associations, local political party training, and women's legal rights training to help women's non-government organizations advocate more effectively for women's rights.

The United States also sponsored a highly successful $300,000 American Bar Association/Freedom House program that assisted the Government in reforming the Moroccan Penal Procedure Code. A follow-on program has just begun to address remaining concerns in the Code. The U.S. Department of Labor signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Morocco to fund a $1.5 million project promoting collective bargaining and the peaceful resolution of labor/management disputes. In addition, the United States-Morocco Free Trade Agreement now being negotiated will also strengthen worker rights.

International Visitor Programs brought several members of Moroccan NGOs, as well as government officials and activists in the fields of children's rights and child trafficking, labor rights, prison reform, and women's rights, to the United States. Five women political activists participated in a special International Visitor Program designed to observe U.S. Congressional elections last November. The Embassy also sponsored the training of three Moroccan judicial experts in Cairo.

PHOTO: IFES

OMAN

Oman has a history of arbitrary arrest and detention, including holding detainees incommunicado; prohibiting the activities of human rights organizations; and restricting freedoms of speech and association — all of which contribute to human rights abuses. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Oman addresses a wide range of critical issues, including support for fair and transparent elections, expansion of the right to privacy and individual freedoms for its citizens, and allowing human rights organizations to operate freely. Outreach efforts continue to target judicial reform, minority issues, and a free and responsible press.

One of the greatest contributors to Oman's human rights problems is the violation of citizens' individual freedoms and privacy rights. The U.S. remains committed to the continued expansion of these rights as evidenced by the Sultan's recent announcement of universal suffrage for this year's election. The Embassy hosted a website design specialist to provide practical training to nongovernmental organization (NGO) staff on using the Internet for networking with other organizations; a particular emphasis was placed on NGOs that serve women and the disabled. Another speaker reinforced the message of religious tolerance and the importance of interfaith dialogue. The Embassy continues to work closely with journalists and editors through visits and collaborative activities to encourage free and responsible reporting. Journalists not only produce numerous articles on their experiences but also discuss the important role that Arabs and Muslims living in the United States have in the editorial process. We also actively urge members of the press in Oman to discontinue the common practice of voluntary self-censorship.

The Parliamentary Strengthening Project, a two-year $150,000 Middle East Democracy Fund-sponsored International Republican Institute initiative, focuses on a capacity-building program to train the staff of Oman's nascent parliament. The training is specifically designed to enhance the ability of staffers to propose legislation or to critique government proposed legislation. Democracy Small Grants Program funds also enabled civil society organizations to increase their outreach and advocacy work on women's issues and with the disabled.

A $559,000 Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) project is funding a regional training academy for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on political participation, political party development, women's issues and media that includes Omani participants. Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner traveled to Oman in June 2002, and discussed human rights developments with a number of Omani officials, NGOs and others.

International Visitor and Embassy funds have implemented workshops in coordination with the International Development Law Organization, a Rome-based NGO. These workshops addressed the issue of judicial reform and featured international experts in the areas of arbitration, management of NGOs, prosecution of newly decreed crimes, cybercrime,

and counterterrorism. Over 500 Omani lawyers, legal officials, prosecutors, investigators, judges, police officials, academics, economic advisors, and NGO managers participated in the workshops, which received extensive media coverage.

QATAR

Qatar is a country in transition from a traditional society with a history of severely restricted freedoms, including the freedom of assembly, association and religion, to a more democratic system of government that protects fundamental rights. Positive developments in the past year include approval of a Constitution that provides for parliamentary representation and protection of basic human rights; the election of a woman to the Central Municipal Council; and the creation of a Human Rights Commission that includes several women members. Serious problems still remain, however, including trafficking in persons and bias against foreign workers. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Qatar addresses a wide range of critical issues, including the establishment of democratic institutions, advancing the role of women, urging the Government of Qatar to address the issues of domestic and foreign workers' rights, and ending trafficking in persons.

The continued restriction of many basic rights has been one of the greatest contributors to Qatar's human rights problems. We expect this to improve as the new Constitution is implemented. The U.S. committed itself to maintain a constant human rights dialogue that has lobbied intensively for easing restrictions on workers' rights and continued progress towards religious freedom. Senior U.S. officials, including the Ambassador and the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), have held productive meetings focusing on these issues with government officials and private leaders during the past year. The U.S. emphasizes the importance of a Muslim-Christian dialogue and regularizing the status of clergy in Qatar. The Embassy supported a Government-sponsored conference, "Building Bridges," promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue.

Collaborating with Government officials and private citizens, the Embassy contributed to the development of programs in the fields of election administration, training of women political candidates, and the development of civil society. The U.S. brought Deputy Governor of South Dakota Carol Hillard to speak on grassroots campaigning at a seminar on women in politics last Spring. A female former municipal candidate also traveled to the United States for a program on women in politics.

Qatar is also a regular participant in several regional initiatives. A $559,000 Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF) project is sponsoring a regional training academy for non-governmental organizations on political participation, political party development, women's issues and media. The HRDF is also sponsoring a regional program and training center in Bahrain to strengthen electoral administration systems in the Persian Gulf, and will work closely with Qatar on this project.

Significant efforts have been made to highlight the significance that the issue of trafficking persons has to the United States Government. We are specifically targeting the use of children brought to Qatar to serve as jockeys in the camel races, and have urged the adoption of age and weight standards for riders. Government officials have agreed to allow a U.S.-funded team to provide consultation and training to instill better immigration controls on children entering the country.

A digital video conference hosted by the Ambassador highlighted the Arab Human Development Report, and hundreds of brochures explaining the history and concept of human rights were distributed along with the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and Trafficking in Persons Reports.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia has a history of suppression of religious freedom, restriction on freedom of expression, trafficking in persons, and other violations of human rights. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Saudi Arabia focuses on these concerns and builds upon quantifiable progress in 2002 in both trafficking and press freedom, with marginal improvement in religious freedom.

The U.S. encourages and promotes improvements in freedom of the press in a number of ways. During 2002, we brought five Saudi reporters to the U.S. on programs related to journalism. The Embassy has also continued a public affairs outreach program to Saudi women leaders, including many journalists. We are also urging the Saudi Government to permit more foreign journalists to visit the country and to report on domestic Saudi issues and international political issues.

The United States is engaging the Government of Saudi Arabia regarding our concerns about religious freedom. We encourage full and consistent implementation of the Government's commitment to free private religious worship; raise cases with the Government where violations have occurred; and encourage the Government to discreetly permit non-Muslim clergy to visit Saudi Arabia to minister to their congregations. The Ambassador and other Embassy officers have repeatedly pressed the Government at senior levels to honor its commitment to the freedom of non-Muslims to worship privately, and to promote religious tolerance of all faith communities, including Shi'a Muslims and Christians, in its educational curricula, media, and mosque sermons. Embassy officers regularly meet with members of minority religious communities in order to follow their activities and monitor violations of their right to worship freely.

U.S. objectives with respect to trafficking in persons are threefold. We are encouraging the Saudi Arabian Government to inform incoming workers of their rights and recourse in response to abuse when they receive visas to travel to Saudi Arabia and upon arrival. We also urge the Government to promote public awareness on issues relating to domestic servants. Finally, we have discussed long-term means of improving the legal

rights of foreign laborers under Saudi labor law. Our Embassy has engaged Saudi officials, encouraged protection for foreign workers under the law, and worked with Saudi media and activists as means to promote U.S. goals. The Embassy is expanding its range of contacts who handle trafficking issues within the Government. We are also encouraging non-governmental organization (NGO) and private involvement and increasing public affairs efforts to highlight the dangers and vulnerabilities of trafficking in persons.

SYRIA

Syria has a history of restricted freedom of expression, including severe constraints on civil society and anti-government demonstrations. As a State Sponsor of Terrorism, Syria is ineligible for U.S. economic assistance. Despite limited resources, the 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Syria is a multi-faceted approach, which includes bilateral discussions, public diplomacy programs, and outreach to expatriate human rights and civil society advocates.

U.S. officials regularly emphasize the importance of freedom of association, speech, and the press and of respect for human rights during meetings with their Syrian counterparts. The U.S. Embassy maintains a dialogue on these matters with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and participates in an inter-embassy human rights monitoring group that exchanges information and coordinates responses and programs. This coordination plays an essential role in promoting human rights in Syria.

In an effort to stimulate discussion about the full range of issues confronting our bilateral relationship, the Embassy helped organize and participated in the second round of the U.S./Syrian Dialogue in January 2003. This informal program provides a valuable forum for exchanging ideas and broadening communication between Syria and the U.S. on a number of issues, including respect for human rights.

The Embassy manages an active public diplomacy program that emphasizes the importance of democracy and human rights. For example, speaker programs encourage greater Syrian participation in public life and address topics such as how individuals can influence the political system, with an emphasis on transparency and civil society; ways that philanthropy can be used to improve society; and, the changing role of Arab and Muslim-American women in U.S. society.

The U.S. maintains an active International Visitor Program designed to expose "up-and-coming" Syrians to alternative viewpoints, professional training, American culture and society, and to encourage broader participation in civic society. This program also introduces participants to their American counterparts and exposes them to strategies through which new ideas and reform can be implemented.

TUNISIA

Tunisia has a history of restricted freedom of expression, arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Tunisia includes a wide range of initiatives in promoting human rights and the further development of democracy and civil society. The strategy focuses on raising concerns with Tunisian officials at all levels, expanding contacts with the local human rights and civil society communities to identify critical human rights issues in the absence of a free press, and working with other countries and international activists to focus assistance and diplomatic pressure.

U.S. officials raise human rights concerns regularly with Tunisian government officials at all levels. The U.S. has also been engaged in a systematic effort to increase contacts with local and international activists and to share information about human rights abuses in Tunisia. Embassy officers meet bimonthly with their counterparts from European embassies to discuss pending human rights cases and trends, and to coordinate attendance at trials and information-gathering meetings with activists.

The Embassy hosted human rights activists at receptions and informal gatherings to provide opportunities for exchange of information without police harassment, as well as a roundtable for leaders of the opposition parties to hold discussions away from ruling party deputies.

The Embassy's small Democracy Fund provided assistance to academic and civil society organizations for human rights/rule of law training, teaching, and advocacy. Approximately $40,000 was awarded to several projects. This included a grant to the Faculty of Jurisprudence to start a core collection of Common Law titles in English, thereby supporting students studying for a degree in common law; a grant to the Arab Institute for Human Rights to cover the costs of publishing the proceedings of its annual conference; and an additional grant to the Arab Institute to translate the State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Tunisia into Arabic.

THE WEST BANK AND GAZA

Continued violence and terrorism were major contributors to Israel's poor human rights record in the West Bank and Gaza during 2002. The Palestinian Authority also had a poor human rights record. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for the West Bank and Gaza centers on implementation of President Bush's two-state vision, the end of violence and the restart of a political process within Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

Support for civil society development in the West Bank and Gaza is a USG priority, and its flagship program, "Tamkeen", has been allocated more than $32 million for 2000-2005. USAID programmed $1,245,787 of these funds into 160 grants to key Palestinian organizations that promote reform and support an active role for citizens and civil society groups in oversight and advocacy roles. These organizations undertook polling and sur-

PHOTO:IFES

veying, promoted policy and legislative change, and organized grassroots fora to determine the needs and priorities of Palestinian citizens. Funding for related civil society strengthening programs has totaled more than $4.3 million in the last seven years. USAID supported a series of workshops that examined and built models of other societies transitioning to democracy, focusing on the associated rule of law issues. USAID also provided more than $1,000,000 in electoral assistance to a consortium of non-governmental organizations preparing the infrastructure for Palestinian general elections, which may take place as early as this year.

USG officials continue to encourage Palestinian legislators to assert their role in governmental reform. USAID-financed videoconferencing equipment permitted legislators separated by border closures to meet, an opportunity that was key to orchestrating the no-confidence vote that challenged the Palestinian Authority's (PA) executive to change the cabinet's membership in 2002. Other programs targeting legislative strengthening are being supported with more than $8 million in funding. Embassy officials also continue to emphasize the unacceptability of violence and demanded PA actions against terrorism within the West Bank and Gaza as well as Israel. In this respect, USAID awarded a total of $500,000 in six grants and provided technical assistance to Palestinian NGOs for workshops, training, and dissemination of information on non-violent ways to resolve political disputes. The discussion of rule of law issues was supported by $1,314,304 in USAID programs, which trained prosecutors and judges, advised courts on case management, supplied reference materials, and improved law school curriculums.

Public diplomacy programs seek to improve human rights awareness in the West Bank and Gaza among all citizens. The U.S. Consulate General has hosted numerous speakers on the topics of rule of law and democratization, as well as pro-

vided Arabic and English books on human rights and democracy to local schools, libraries and other contacts. Palestinians are also regular participants in the Salzburg Seminar, International Visitor, and Fulbright Summer Institute programs.

YEMEN

Yemen has a history of problems in both the political and social sphere, including citizens' limited ability to change the government, a weak judiciary, human rights abuses, and laws limiting freedom of expression. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Yemen addresses the need for the Government to strengthen its human rights record, continue to enact social reforms, improve problems within the judiciary, and further the process of democratic development. The United States has initiated several projects addressing these issues, including programs aimed at expanding Yemen's political parties, improving election administration, increasing voter participation, and improving the country's human rights record.

The Defense Department Counter-Terrorism Fellowship funds a training program for Yemeni military officers on the importance of respecting human rights. The result of this project has been a marked decrease in cases of human rights abuse by the military.

At the encouragement of the U.S., Yemen has enacted a long-term program of judicial reform, in an attempt to counter the numerous problems within the judiciary. The courts are only nominally independent and have been plagued by corruption, executive branch interference, and the failure of authorities to enforce rulings.

In addition to political reforms, the United States has been urging the Government of Yemen to enact social

PHOTO:USAID/Thomas Hartwell

PHOTO:USAID/Thomas Hartwell

reforms, encouraging respect for human rights as well as eliminating discrimination against Yemeni citizens, especially minorities. The Embassy's Public Diplomacy Office funded 17 separate projects in 2002, all of which have had ambitious aims in improving Yemeni society. One of the most notable was the program to train and educate ten influential religious leaders on political, civil, and constitutional rights guaranteed under Yemen's new Human Rights Law. Another of these was a program aimed at decreasing violence against women, in which leaders from local women's groups worked with officials from several ministries to raise awareness of the psychological, medical, criminal, cultural, and legal roots of violence against women. This program led to the creation of a national network of women's groups aiding victims of domestic violence. Yemeni women have traditionally been politically and socially marginalized, with little female political participation, restricted access to healthcare and education, as well as widespread reports of domestic abuse, including female genital mutilation. Under a USDA program, the United States established a project to build and furnish new primary schools for girls in isolated rural areas in order to give girls access to modern education and to facilitate their inclusion within society.

Although the citizens of Yemen still have limited ability to change their Government, significant strides have been made to fix problems plaguing the electoral system, such as lack of voter participation as well as corruption within local political structures. The United States funded programs by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) to strengthen Yemen's multi-party system. They worked directly with political activists to improve future

elections by focusing on increasing women's political participation and overall voter registration, and improve local governance.

NDI also initiated a U.S.-funded program in which members of the local councils, very powerful and influential in Yemen's political tradition, were trained to decrease problems of patronage, corruption, and gender bias. As a result of both of these efforts, the April 2003 national parliamentary elections were generally considered to have been a significant improvement over previous elections, with good marks for organization, participation, and security. The Ambassador, embassy staffers, and election observers from IFES, NDI, the European Union and the UN were present at polling places throughout the country to observe the elections.

SOUTH ASIA

Countries in South Asia face myriad human rights and democracy challenges. There are, however, several common themes to the problems of the region. Sectarian tensions, homegrown and imported terrorist groups, extremism, pervasive corruption and ineffective legal systems present major obstacles to development, peace and stability in South Asia. Terrorism and the many insurgencies that plague the region both reflect and contribute to a poor human rights climate. The unprecedented level of U.S. engagement with the countries of the region provides an opportunity and an obligation to press for greater democratic accountability and respect for individual rights.

"We go forward with confidence, because we trust in the power of human freedom to change lives and nations."

President Bush, Speech at American Enterprise Institute February 26, 2003

The United States is addressing the broader challenges in South Asia through counterterror, conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts, education and economic reform, and Muslim outreach activities. U.S. democracy programs combine legislative, judicial, and local governance reform and projects to strengthen civil society and independent media at national and local levels to improve transparency, accountability and inclusiveness. Support for democratic "precursors" such as political party building and reform, promoting women and minority participation in political processes and institutions, human rights education and training, and anti-trafficking and child labor legislation and enforcement programs are also major areas of activity.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR ADJUDICATING CASES IN SRI LANKA

Since November 2002, USAID and the Sri Lankan National Commission of Jurists (SLNCJ), the local implementing non-governmental organization, have been setting up the physical facilities needed to run the legal assistance program. USAID has been the purchasing and installing in the courts $100,000 in office equipment and materials for use primarily by SLNCJ, but secondarily by the courts. This allows the courts to improve their efficiency and process cases in a more timely fashion. In the next few months, the SLNCJ will initiate the legal aid and awareness aspects of the program, which focus on vulnerable groups in the north and east of the island, strengthening rule of law in these areas. Much of the program's outreach will be in areas heavily populated by Tamils. We hope the Tamils will view this assistance as a benefit, albeit minor, of the ceasefire. Providing them with greater access to the judicial system will hopefully strengthen their regard for the government and rule of law.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a nation recovering from 23 years of civil war and political instability. Most governing and civil society institutions deteriorated and largely ceased to function. Afghan society experienced waves of serious human rights abuses during the years of war that touched nearly every ethnic group, religious minorities, and the female half of the population.

To help Afghanistan build democratic institutions, the Embassy worked closely with the commissions mandated by the 2001 Bonn Agreement to undertake constitutional, judicial, and human rights reform and provided $200,000 to the Technical Advisory Services and Office Support for the Bonn Commissions. The U.S. Government provided advisors and technical support to help the Constitutional Commission's Drafting Committee prepare a draft constitution, plan for public consultations, and set up permanent offices. The draft will be considered for approval during a Constitutional Loya Jirga in October 2003. The U.S. Government also helped get the Judicial and Human Rights Commissions up and running with technical assistance and office equipment.

The Embassy encouraged the growth of civil society organizations and grassroots political organizing to build public awareness and engagement in the run up to national elections in June 2004. Reaching out to Afghanistan's next generation of leaders, the Embassy sent 12 young Afghans to the United States for a seminar on conflict resolution and sent

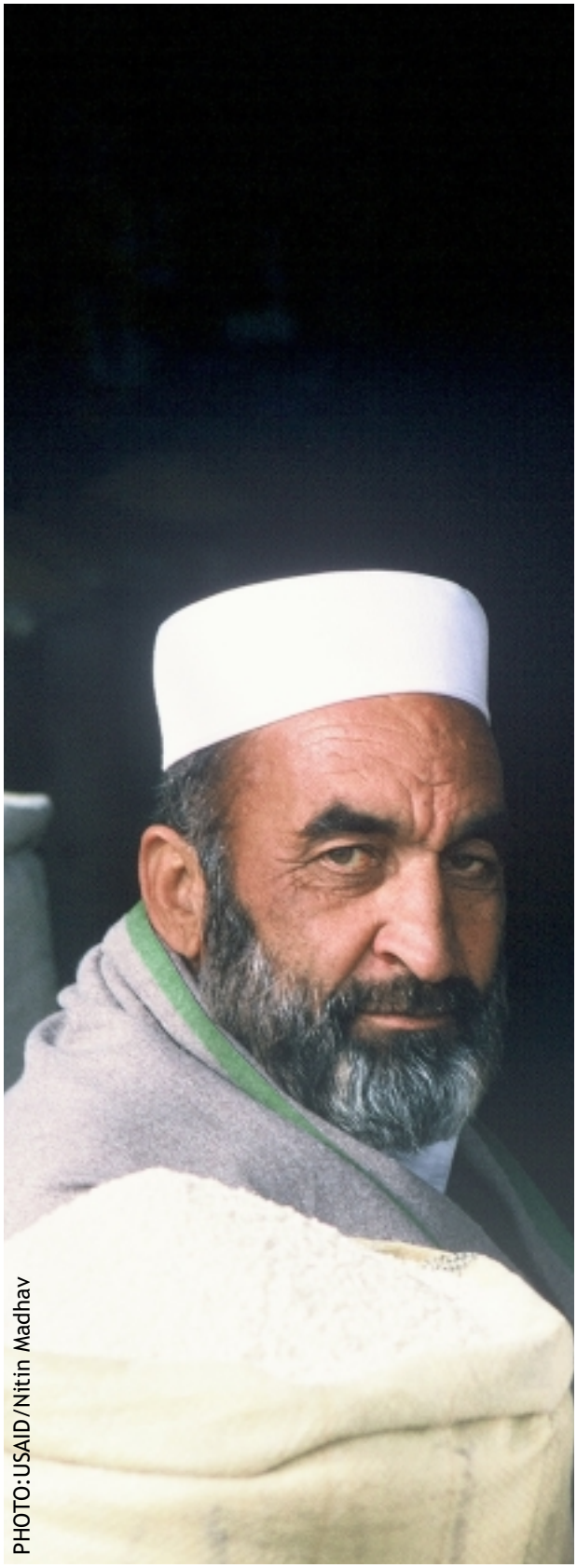


PHOTO: USAID/Nitin Madhav

another six Afghans on a three-week International Visitor program on "Human Rights and Democracy."

Furthering the U.S. policy of promoting the rights of women, the Embassy used $163,000 to send a group of female political activists to the United States to participate in an international advocacy training program on human rights in preparation for the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002. Women participated in the Loya Jirga in significant numbers, and a female candidate ran for the office of President. The Embassy sent 14 women from throughout the Afghan government on an International Visitors' program designed to enhance leadership skills.

The U.S. Government provided a grant of $251,000 to support the establishment of mobile legal clinics inside Afghanistan and among Afghan women refugees in Pakistan to provide women with basic legal training. The U.S. Government also funded $2,575,000 for the establishment of ten neighborhood-based Women's Centers in Kabul and several nearby cities to provide vocational training to women. Another 14 Women's Centers focusing on literacy and development of vocational skills are being constructed throughout Afghanistan.

To advance respect for human rights among law enforcement officials, the Embassy reached an agreement with the Ministry of Interior to provide U.S. trainers to prepare Afghan officials to teach a two-week program on human rights, leadership, and modern policing techniques during the basic training for police officers. The human rights awareness component of the training will cost approximately $1 million. The starting point for the program is Kabul's 7,000 person police force.

The Embassy encouraged the creation of a free and independent press, laying the groundwork to establish 16 independent radio stations with a grant of $1.95 million. Programming content is slated to include human rights and legal advocacy. The Embassy also provided modest grants to two independent newspapers.

To address the weakness of Afghanistan's education system, the Embassy sent 13 female education specialists to the United States for a four-week teacher-training program. The program built skills in curriculum and materials development, and improved computer literacy with a train-the-trainer component.

BANGLADESH

During 2002, the United States continued to push for Bangladesh to have stronger democratic institutions, a political process more transparent and accountable to citizens, and increased respect for the rule of law and human rights for its citizens. To accomplish these goals, the U.S. has a number of successful programs devoted to improving good governance, fostering democracy, and attempting to eliminate child labor and trafficking of persons. In Fiscal Year 2003, U.S. human rights funding for Bangladesh is expected to exceed $14 million.

Bangladesh continued its successful transition from military rule to democracy in 2002. Since 1991 the country has held

three parliamentary elections, which though violent, were judged generally free and fair by the U.S. Government and other international observers. This transition from military rule to democracy has allowed the U.S. Government to engage this moderate Muslim nation on human rights. The Embassy utilizes USAID programs that seek to strengthen human rights groups and fight corruption. The U.S. Government spent approximately $1.8 million dollars on human rights promotion, NGO grants, training, and technical assistance in Bangladesh. These joint programs work to strengthen Parliament and local government and make those democratic institutions more accountable to their citizens. In addition, the public affairs section of the Embassy helped establish a program of alternative dispute resolution, which holds great promise of clearing the court system of its million-case backlog.

Improving conditions for Bangladeshi workers has been an important aspect of Embassy Dhaka's overall strategy for many years. A major focus has been eliminating the worst forms of child labor, where a $6 million dollar program is having an effect. Working with the Government, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and local labor and industry groups, the Embassy has achieved some notable successes, including the virtual elimination of child labor from the ready-made garment industry. A $1.5 million dollar garment industry labor relations project has helped to make this a reality. In addition, Bangladesh has committed to allowing full freedom of association in the export processing zones (EPZs), and Embassy Dhaka continues to press the government to make good on this promise. The ILO, with USAID and Department of Labor funding, is working with EPZ management to make this commitment a reality.

Embassy Dhaka continues to work with government, civil society, and other donors to help USAID lead a thematic working group on anti-trafficking, including launching a media package that is currently being used by all NGOs working on the issue of trafficking. The results of this media package are clear: public awareness and condemnation of trafficking are going up, as are arrests and conviction of traffickers. Thirty-two traffickers were convicted in 2002 as a direct result of this program.

PHOTO:USAID/Nitin Madhav

BHUTAN

Although Bhutan is ruled by a hereditary monarch, in recent years its Government has adopted some measures to increase the power of the National Assembly, and the King has continued the efforts toward social and political modernization begun by his father. The current move to a constitutional monarchy provides a significant opportunity for our Bhutan human rights agenda. Nonetheless, a number of human rights problems exist: the Government prohibits political parties; arbitrary arrest and detention have remained problems; and torture and abuse of detainees reportedly have continued, with impunity for abusers. The U.S. Government's strategy for Bhutan focuses on helping the country evolve into a constitutional monarchy with greater civil liberties, and also addresses the issue of Nepalese refugees who left Bhutan in 1991-92. In general, however, the absence of both diplomatic relations and an official U.S. presence in Thimphu have limited the ability to monitor and influence human rights developments there.

Prior to 2002, there was no written constitution in Bhutan to protect fundamental political and human rights; however, during 2002 and 2003 a constitution was being drafted and debated by the National Assembly and the Cabinet. The U.S. has provided advice to the Government throughout this process. The Ambassador and a Political Officer traveled to Thimphu in April, and a Political Officer and Senate Staff Delegation traveled there in December, to meet with government officials and exchange information regarding the U.S. system of governance. As Bhutan undergoes a transition to a constitutional monarchy, a development that could materialize within two years, the U.S. will continue to provide information to the Government and to other appropriate interested parties on our Constitution and governmental structure.

The U.S. furthered its commitment to supporting democracy on the local level. In addition to maintaining regular contact with India-based Bhutanese NGOs, the Embassy sponsored two Bhutanese Governors to attend programs on state and local governance through the International Visitors Program.

Embassy officers have engaged the Government in numerous meetings and delivered demarches to Bhutanese officials in New Delhi regarding the plight of the 100,000 refugees currently lodged in Nepalese camps. Due in part to U.S. vigilance, the Governments of Nepal and Bhutan have made progress towards resolving this situation.

INDIA

Despite being a strong and vibrant democracy, human rights problems are widespread in India. Many of these abuses are generated by a traditionally hierarchical social structure, deeply rooted tensions among the country's many ethnic and religious communities, violent secessionist movements and the authorities' attempts to repress them, and deficient police methods and training. To help counter these problems, the U.S. actively engages the Government of India (GOI) to assist in the improvement of human

rights. These engagements include a wide variety of tools, including public diplomacy and official diplomatic channels to facilitate advances and enhance U.S.-India cooperative efforts.

Throughout the year the U.S. advocated improvements in the country's effectiveness in enforcing the legislative framework designed to prohibit and punish abuses. In October, U.S. officials, including a Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, met with senior Indian officials to discuss an upcoming session of the Commission on Human Rights and the Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT). At the meeting's conclusion, Indian officials confirmed plans to amend its penal code in conformity with OPCAT.

The U.S. Embassy provided a grant to the Institute of Social Sciences in New Delhi to provide political and organizational training to strengthen the skills of local legislators from Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, the Embassy took the lead in mobilizing interest among the foreign diplomatic community to observe the 2002 state Legislative Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir in September/October. Furthermore, Embassy observers visited some 200 polling stations during three rounds of elections and reported their observations. These elections proved to be the most transparent, free, and fair in Kashmir's recent history, due in part to the strong role of the National Election Commission, which the U.S. supported.

The U.S. Government supported a wide range of initiatives to encourage religious tolerance and freedom, including regular consultations with high level officials. In April 2002, the Ambassador publicly condemned the religiously-motivated attacks in Gujarat that resulted in the deaths of

PHOTO:USAID/Nitin Madhav

over 2,000 Muslims. His statement followed U.S. aid that provided over $200,000 to help more than 50,000 internally displaced persons in urban areas of Gujarat. These families were given family survival kits, hygiene kits, employment training, medical care, and stress counseling.

The U.S. Embassy sponsored approximately 45 journalists to travel to the United States as International Visitors in 2002. By participating in courses and training on broadcast media, the formulation of U.S. foreign policy, state and local governance, and U.S. economic policy, these journalists were exposed to the strong connection between open access to government officials and information and freedom of the press in the United States.

Finally, the U.S. has provided funding to support expanded roles for women. On July 30, the consulates in Mumbai and Chennai organized Digital Video Conferences on combating domestic violence. Furthermore, the Embassy gave a $60,000 grant to the New Delhi NGO, Shakti Shalini, to help women victimized by domestic violence. This organization continued to be instrumental in reforming Indian law to protect women from dowry-related deaths. Following on these steps, the U.S. Government gave an additional $300,000 to assist in the design of activities that helped to facilitate the ability of women to pursue their legal rights, enhance the functioning of institutional channels for dispute resolution, redress of grievances, and expand legal services and protections to women.

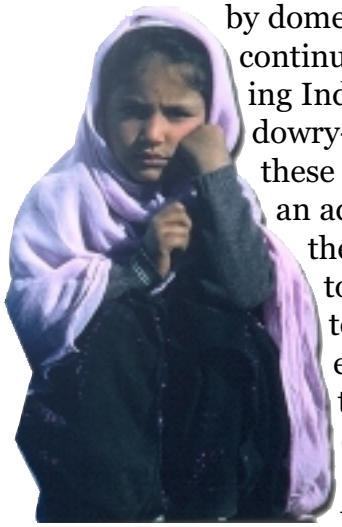


PHOTO:USAID/Nitin Madhav

During the year, Embassy officials worked with Indian officials and international organizations to address the problem of trafficking in persons (TIP). Specifically, the Embassy sponsored seven Indian human rights professionals to attend multi-regional programs on trafficking of women and children. In addition, the U.S. administered $1.62 million for India to address trafficking, violence against women and child labor, and to promote opportunities for disadvantaged groups to participate equitably in society. Furthermore, the Embassy engaged the Government of India on efforts to combat trafficking at numerous meetings. At the first bilateral Global Issues Forum on October 30, the U.S. launched an effort to cooperate more closely in multilateral fora, and encouraged increased prosecutions in cases of trafficking in persons.

The U.S. continued to call for reforms in the India labor market. The U.S. Government continued to engage the Government of India on International Labor Organization Convention 182 relating to child labor, which India has signed but not ratified.

NEPAL

The Human Rights situation in Nepal is rapidly escalating into a crisis. To address this situation, the U.S. actively engages the Government of Nepal (GON), the military, and members of civil society on a variety of fronts to advance human rights. U.S. programs tackle needs in areas as diverse as rehabilitation of torture victims, advocacy in a democracy, voter education, child labor, trafficking in persons, civic education, and women's political participation.

For the past seven years, Nepal has been gripped by a violent domestic Maoist insurgency in which nearly 7,000 people have been killed. To counter this, a central part of all U.S-Nepalisi bilateral dialogue at all levels of interaction with the police, the army, and the civilian government has been frank and there have been serious discussions about the importance of human rights. The Embassy and the armed services of Nepal have maintained an active dialogue on the subject of human rights. Specifically, the Embassy has continued to argue that respect for civilian rights is a tactical necessity in counterinsurgency, as well as a moral imperative of a democratic government. The U.S. Embassy's repeated demarches demonstrably have influenced the human rights sensitivity of top military leaders. The U.S. has also sponsored guest speakers for journalists, editors, and the military government on the importance of human rights. For instance, in September the U.S. Government sponsored a two-day seminar on the Law of Armed Conflict and Rules of Engagement for approximately 20 Royal Nepali Army (RNA) officers at the rank of colonel and above. To follow up, in December the U.S. Government trained the RNA on civil affairs. In May the U.S. Government sponsored a military law exchange program that focused on the Law of Armed Conflict and rules of engagement, military justice and disciplinary framework, and the training of legal professionals in the military.

Furthermore, in June the U.S. Government initiated a $600,000 project to rehabilitate torture victims and build capacity among health professionals that deal with torture victims. Under a cooperative agreement with a local NGO, more than 1,000 torture victims and their families will receive comprehensive medical and psychological care, as well as legal counseling. Mobile treatment clinics also conduct community awareness programs to inform rural communities of their rights and the legal and therapeutic recourse available to them. Fact-finding teams (composed of a doctor, a lawyer, and a journalist) investigate, document, and report credible accounts of torture.

To address Nepal's weak democratic institutions, the U.S. Government worked with the Government, civil society, and American NGOs to bolster support for free and fair elections. A two-year voter education program, funded at approximately $600,000, trained 180 district election officials and 1,227 civic/political leaders from 30 districts in proper election procedures. The program also printed and distributed 50,000 voter awareness booklets with pertinent election laws and 70,000 voter resource manuals. In addition, 30 episodes of a radio drama on voters' rights and responsibilities were aired in 10 local languages. As a result, district election officials, local political party and civic leaders, as well as general voters, benefited from increased awareness of election procedures. To increase awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities in Nepal's relatively young democracy, the public diplomacy section of the U.S. Embassy sponsored a $164,451 program to develop a civic education curriculum for schools in at least 15 districts. The curriculum has been so successfully received that the Ministry of Education plans to implement its use in grades 10-12 and has asked for complementary materials for use at the primary school level.

The U.S. continued to call for reforms in the Nepal labor market. The U.S. Government has committed $5 million for a comprehensive, three-year, "time-bound" program to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. This program is being implemented through the International Labor Organization and the NGO, World Education.

The U.S. has provided funding to support expanded roles for women and to strengthen advocacy and local government accountability. Thus far, women's coalitions have engaged in advocacy campaigns on a wide variety of issues, including the dowry system, leadership training, employment conditions for women in hotels and restaurants, reservation of 25 percent of local government budgets for women's development, and combating witchcraft accusations.

The U.S. has supported with $900,000 anti-trafficking programs that included training for local government anti-trafficking task forces, overseas employment agency rights training, dissemination of information on safe migration, psychosocial counseling, and anti-trafficking network strengthening. The U.S. Government reviewed studies focused on labor and migration laws in the context of trafficking and women's right to migrate. The U.S. Government also funded a program through UNICEF to provide computer equipment and to design a database for police units specifically charged with limiting trafficking.

PAKISTAN

To promote democracy and fair labor standards and to address Pakistan's religious freedom and human rights record, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates worked with the Government and local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to strengthen existing institutions, train civil society and government leaders, and raise awareness on key human rights and democracy issues. The Ambassador commemorated International Human Rights Day by hosting a large reception honoring Pakistan's civil society. At this reception, she reminded the audience that "every day in Pakistan we must focus on human rights."

Since the 1999 bloodless coup, the U.S. Government has pursued a goal of building democracy in Pakistan. To support this goal, the U.S. Government provided approximately $5 million for a voting awareness campaign and training for poll watchers before the October general elections, to encourage voter turnout and institutionalize poll monitoring. Specifically, the U.S. Government strengthened democratic institutions by providing funding to a local NGO to conduct ongoing orientation programs for newly elected legislators. As a direct result of this program, five Pakistani political and civil society leaders were able to participate in International Visitors Programs, and more are slated to attend in the coming months. In addition, the U.S. Government continued to discuss human rights concerns in high level meetings with the leaders of Pakistan, including with the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister.

As part of the U.S. Government's Border Security Program training, the Embassy worked with the United States High Commission for Refugee UNHCR to offer a four-hour training block to 53 Pakistani law enforcement personnel in Quetta and Peshawar on International Refugee Law to reduce human rights violations against refugees.

Furthering the U.S. Government's policy of encouraging religious freedom, the U.S. Ambassador's demarche to the Attorney General and Law Ministry of Pakistan regarding several blasphemy death sentences helped expedite two long-standing appeals. The U.S. has sent two Islamic clerics on a specially-tailored International Visitors Program to promote understanding and religious tolerance. Furthermore, ongoing contacts with government security forces improved protection for religious minorities and helped to defuse at least one planned attack on a Christian church on Christmas Eve. The U.S. Government also pushed for further aggressive investigations and prosecutions of those who perpetrated violence against religious minorities, including those allegedly responsible for the recent attacks in Taxila, Murree, and Karachi.

The U.S. continued to be the largest supporter of International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor in Pakistan. Specifically, the U.S. sponsored a $5 million fund to combat child labor and $1.5 million for workforce education and skills training in Punjab province. The projects target working children and children at risk of falling into work by placing them in non-formal education centers to learn basic literacy and numeric skills, with the goal of mainstreaming them into the government school sector. In addition, to continue to support grassroots community and labor organizations, the Embassy sent a leader of the Bonded Labor Liberation Front on a multi-regional IV program on "NGO Management."

In support of the U.S. Government's policy to combat trafficking worldwide, the Embassy sent a speaker to Pakistan's national conference on trafficking and human smuggling to speak about steps the Government could take to fight trafficking in persons.

PHOTO:USAID

SRI LANKA

The ongoing peace process has had more of a direct and dramatic impact on improving the human rights situation in Sri Lanka than any other factor during the past year. The U.S. Government continued to contribute to the peace process in many ways, including through consistent and high-level use of public diplomacy tools and through private interaction with key actors. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Sri Lanka includes programs to assist and reinforce the peace process, including contributing close to $1.5 million to support technical experts of the new Peace Secretariat and for outreach programs to engage the public.

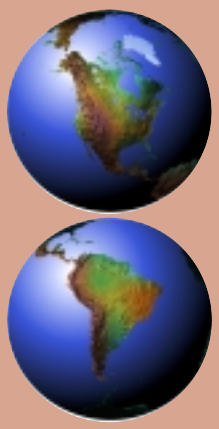
The Government's arbitrary arrests of Tamils has been a serious human rights problem. During the year, the U.S. supported projects to address the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and to insure that no new arrests under the PTA occurred. In addition, the U.S. Government emphasized to the Government the importance of actively investigating reports of government officials failing to comply with legal protections. U.S. programs initiated the purchasing of equipment to process the cases and is in the final stages of helping fund attorneys for persons still in government custody.

The U.S. Government maintains indirect contact with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but recognizes that the LTTE is on the U.S. Government's Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list. U.S. officials made public statements raising concerns about the LTTE's forcible recruitment of children and harassment of the minority Muslim population. Moreover, U.S. officials made approaches to influential Tamil politicians regarding the behavior of the LTTE. At year's end, tensions between the Muslim community and the LTTE had eased somewhat, and the LTTE agreed to renew its work with UNICEF to stop child recruitment and to counteract the effects on those already recruited.

PHOTO: USAID/Nitin Madhav

During the year, the U.S. used International Visitors Program grants to further promote human rights and religious freedom. During the past year, the Embassy nominated a Sri Lankan Muslim leader to participate in an "Islam in America" program. The Embassy also nominated numerous key individuals from human rights organizations for programs focusing on improving organizational modalities and improvement in judicial reform.

The U.S. Government continued to discuss with the Government of Sri Lanka the problem of trafficking in persons. The Embassy provided assistance to the National Child Protection Authority and the Don Bosco Technical Center for the NGOs' work in combating trafficking in children and rehabilitating those children that have been sexually exploited.



WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Democratic institutions and civil society face serious challenges in several countries in the Western Hemisphere. Protection of fundamental human rights, including labor rights, often needs strengthening, especially in the eight Latin American countries we have highlighted. Weak judicial systems in the region have been cited for failing to enforce the rule of law and protect fundamental human rights, thus undermining democratic stability. Reconciliation, including support to human rights investigations of abuses during military dictatorships and other non-democratic governments, and accountability for past abuses remain critical.

In 2002 and 2003, the United States focused on consolidating democratic institutions and promoting accountability and respect for human rights in the Western Hemisphere. Current activities include projects to strengthen democratic mechanisms and institutions in Venezuela through cooperative efforts with the Organization of American States (OAS), government officials, political parties, unions, civil society organizations, and business community organizations across the Venezuelan political spectrum. In Colombia, the U.S. is working with the Government to tackle the root causes of human rights abuses and democratic instability while continuing to invest in emergency humanitarian assistance and protection measures necessary to address the internal armed conflict. We have launched a program to protect threatened members of the judiciary in Colombia through temporary relocation and training in a third country. The U.S. Department of State has also worked with USAID to strengthen electoral processes, voter registration and education in Peruvian and Nicaraguan elections, and to support an archival project in Paraguay working to make human rights records accessible to the public.

"Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity."

President Bush
State of the Union Speech
January 28, 2003

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN VENEZUELA

This project administered by the National Endowment for Democracy supported Organization of American States-led efforts to promote political dialogue in Venezuela. The project focuses on strengthening political parties, trade unions, and civil society; conflict resolution; education reform; and land reform. Additional sub-projects will address drafting of a suffrage law and training journalists. The polarization of Venezuelan society, attempts to arrest strike leaders, and wholesale dismissal of oil company employees have limited the impact of programs. The most visible result to date has been in regional projects on conflict resolution which have helped minimize the spread of political violence to the provinces and local government. The International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute continue to work in non-partisan efforts to promote party-building and positive democratic alternatives as Venezuelans prepare to vote in a recall referendum later this year.

PHOTO: IFES

COLOMBIA

While Colombia is a multi-party, constitutional democracy, a major internal armed conflict pits the Government against leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries—both financed by drug trafficking and other criminal activities. This has created an environment in which serious violations of human rights, almost all of which are committed by guerrillas or paramilitaries, are commonplace. The civilian judiciary is independent of the executive and legislative branches, but confronts profound challenges from corruption and intimidation by guerrillas, paramilitaries, and other wealthy criminal organizations. More significantly, the cumbersome inquisitorial judicial system is overworked and faces serious resource constraints, a situation that has made impunity the single greatest threat to the integrity of the Colombian state and the creation of a culture of respect for human rights.

The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Colombia is both proactive and responsive, tackling the root causes of human rights and democratic instability while continuing to invest in emergency humanitarian assistance and protection measures necessary to address the internal armed conflict. Key strategic objectives include protection for threatened populations, increased access to justice, support for judicial reforms and the rule of law, promotion of local governance and peace initiatives, and provision of humanitarian assistance.

Working with the Colombian Ministry of Interior, the U.S. has provided protection assistance to 2,068 people and 36 offices under threat. The protection program includes threatened human rights workers, union leaders, journalists, and members of the left wing Patriotic Union Party. In 2002, it was expanded to include mayors, city council members and municipal human rights workers after the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) started to systematically threaten them. Equally important, the program's Early Warning System expanded to 12 regions. This allowed it to respond effectively to 116 of 121 alerts, potentially preventing massacres, forced displacements, and other egregious human rights violations.

Recruitment of child soldiers is a growing problem in Colombia. The Colombian government estimated that 12,000 to 15,000 children were members of illegal armed groups in 2002. The U.S supports a program with the Government of Colombia for the re-integration of child soldiers from illegal armed groups. In 1999, the first center for the specialized treatment of ex-combatant children was opened. To date, this program has benefited approximately 636 ex-combatant

PHOTO:IFES

children and has projected funding through 2004.

The U.S. has funded 21 Justice and Peace Houses — one-stop legal assistance shops — thereby improving access to justice for approximately 1.4 million poor and marginalized Colombians. In order to strengthen the Government of Colombia's capability to investigate and prosecute human rights cases, the U.S. supports the Human Rights Unit in the Prosecutor General's Office. This support has included the formation and training of 11 satellite Human Rights Units. These units are made up of forensic specialists, investigators, and prosecutors. In addition, the donation, installation and training on the various forensic systems have substantially improved law enforcement's ability to investigate and prosecute hu-man rights crimes in Colombia. For ex-ample, Integrated Ballistic Identification Systems have been installed in five locations throughout Colombia while the Automated Fingerprint Identification System is being upgraded and networked. The combination of trained units and increased forensic capabilities has resulted in an increased ability to investigate and prosecute human rights violations.

The U.S. has worked to help reform Colombia's criminal code and move the system towards an accusatorial system. This should help accelerate the legal process — legal cases move exceedingly slowly in Colombia. The U.S. funded site visits for judges and legislators to observe the accusatory system in practice in Puerto Rico. The U.S. has organized joint accusatory trial technique courses for judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and investigators, and implemented an instructors', course at the Prosecutor General's training facility. The instructors then conduct courses in forensic specialties, new prosecutorial methodology, basic investigative skills, trial techniques, interview techniques and crime scene management. To date, more than 2,500 prosecutors, investigators, and judges have been trained in such courses.

In response to the approximately 3,000 kidnapping cases per year, the U.S. has assisted the Government of Colombia in developing and implementing a comprehensive program to investigate and prosecute kidnapping and extortion offenses. Six courses in the areas of Human Resources Intelligence Management, Racketeering Enterprise Investigations, Kidnaping Investigations and Ransom Investigations, and Interview and Interrogation have been held for 180 law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and military personnel. The intimidation of witnesses and judicial sector personnel is also a serious problem. The U.S. has provided training and equipment for GOC protective force personnel in both the witness and dignitary protection areas, including personnel from the Bogota Mayoral Office and other ministers' security details.

The Local Governance Program, which works to improve the capacity of municipal governments to involve citizens in local decision-making, provide services, and effectively and transparently manage resources, supported the establishment of 66 social infrastructure projects in 27 municipalities. These projects are administered through local citizen oversight committees that establish project priorities and oversee their management

and financing. In addition, USAID successfully completed a nationwide public awareness anti-corruption campaign that reached six million citizens through radio, newspaper, and television messages and standardized internal control units in five governmental agencies. The U.S.-funded Peace Initiative Program provided $2.5 million in grants to 21 private and public sector Colombian organizations working to promote a culture of peace in the country.

The on-going armed conflict in Colombia has resulted in the displacement of approximately 2 million people. The U.S. is funding seven international organizations (IOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Colombia, providing emergency humanitarian assistance to newly displaced persons during their first three months of displacement. The U.S. is also providing mid- to long-term assistance to displaced persons through six IOs and NGOs. The latter programs focus more on economic reintegration of displaced where they reside rather than relocation.

Violence against labor union leaders and activists continues to be a serious problem in Colombia. In order to combat this problem, the USG is supporting a temporary relocation and training project. In its first year, 27 trade union members received training in the U.S. to improve the organizational, collective bargaining, and public/community relations skills of Colombian trade unions. The U.S. is working to ensure compliance with labor conditions in the Andean Trade Preference and Drug Eradication Act, and is encouraging efforts to modernize national legislation in accordance with Colombian commitments to the International Labor Organization.

PHOTO: IFES

CUBA

Facing an openly and actively hostile Government, the United States Government and the U.S. Interest Section (USINT) in Havana confront significant challenges in their ongoing efforts to promote human rights, free access to information, and respect for democratic ideas in Cuba. Public diplomacy initiatives that would elicit only mild and favorable comment elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere threaten, to a surprising degree, the Cuban Government's traditional control over all aspects of life including access to information and opinion. Knowing that the Government has repeatedly acted to block such activities and stifle independent Cuban voices, the U.S. must operate quietly and creatively to support the Cuban people as they move toward democracy.

To better meet these goals, our strategy consolidates an array of programs to promote democratization, respect for human rights, and development of a free-market economy into the Enhanced Outreach Initiative (EOI). This initiative focuses on practical informational programs to promote democratic reforms and strengthen civil society, including discrete projects to support broader and balanced civil access to information. In addition, USINT follows the cases of more than 350 prisoners of conscience in Cuban jails, including more than 77 arrested since March 18. Their ongoing reporting supports broader U.S. efforts to draw international attention to the gravity of the human rights situation in Cuba.

The most significant human rights issue, in an extraordinarily repressive environment, is systematic official mistreatment of any citizen with the courage to challenge a rigid adherence to the "untouchable" socialist system. The Government works to harass, dissuade, and punish any independent voice, including those citizens who sought peaceful and productive change through the constitutionally sanctioned Varela Project. Targets of official repression include political dissenters, journalists, union members, and even librarians working outside the state monopolies. The regime resists international efforts to improve the treatment of its many prisoners of conscience, refusing an official mission of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights and repeatedly denying access requests by the International Committee for the Red Cross.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Weak Dominican public institutions at times fail to protect fundamental human rights and enforce the rule of law, undermining democratic consolidation in the Dominican Republic. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for the Dominican Republic worked to ensure free and fair elections, promote respect for human rights, end unwarranted police killings, eliminate child labor, combat domestic violence, and support judicial reforms and the rule of law.

The U.S. promoted the rule of law in the Dominican Republic by seeking major reforms in criminal procedures, Public Ministry career laws, criminal investigation methodology, and legal aid to indigents and public administration. The 2002 Criminal Procedure Code will, once fully implemented, streamline the crimi-

nal procedure process and provide greater legal protections to the accused. Civil service legislation approved in April 2003 establishes a transparent system for selection, performance evaluation, and removal of career prosecutors, improving practical implementation of the new criminal code and overall institutional efficiency. U.S. technical assistance and training should ensure smooth implementation of these reforms.

Continued U.S. representations to the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) led to General Marte Martinez replacing notorious former National Police Chief Candelier. This change of leadership directly contributed to a reduction in unwarranted police killings and enhanced cooperation between police and civilian authorities.

U.S. technical assistance and training strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system. With our help, the GODR initiated a public defense program to promote greater access to justice for indigent Dominicans. The U.S. installed a criminal case tracking system in the National District and provided assistance on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, allowing expedition of final judgments and a reduction in presentencing incarceration.

In October, the U.S. organized an assessment report on Dominican military-and police-run prisons, which contributed to humanitarian prison infrastructure improvements, including military doctor visits to address prisoners' health concerns. The U.S. hosted a year-round series of human rights seminars and con-

PHOTO: USAID/Luigi Crespo

ferences by the Dominican Military Institute of Human Rights, focused on the development of a "Consensus Document on Military and Human Rights." The U.S. continued to incorporate basic human rights instruction in all U.S. military provided training.

Throughout the year, U.S. officials provided speeches, press assistance, and information promoting police reform, protection of human rights, judicial and legislative reform, civic education, and other aspects of human rights and democracy building. Speaker programs brought U.S. experts to address Dominican audiences on a wide range of topics, including civilian oversight of the police, the protection of human rights by the police force, effective anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) legislation, and constitutional reform.

The U.S. also sponsored Dominican participation in civic education, democracy and human rights exchange programs in the U.S. In September, government officials and community activists came to the U.S. to attend a training seminar on the prevention of domestic violence. Participant follow-up included initiatives to set up a shelter for battered women and develop educational outreach programs on domestic violence prevention.

PHOTO: USAID/Luigi Crespo

The U.S. provided technical assistance to both the Congressional Commission in charge of the Police Reform Draft Bill and legal and human rights civil society organizations working to debate and analyze the bill. Final legislation incorporated international standards of police performance in terms of transparency and professionalism. Once implemented, the Act will have an important impact on respect for human rights and due process.

Throughout the year, the United States continued to encourage robust Government support for efforts to eliminate child labor, dedicating over $1.75 million per year to multi-year programs. These included programs targeting the worst forms of child labor and projects to rescue over 8,000 Dominican children working in the sex industry and under harsh conditions at coffee plantations and tomato plantations.

The United States continued to work closely with the GODR to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) and alien smuggling. Among other activities, the U.S. supported anti-TIP meetings with key officials, encouraged the activities of the first Latin American Reception Center for Trafficked and Migrant women, and funded technical assistance to prepare anti-TIP legislation.

ECUADOR

Ecuador has a history of political instability, pervasive corruption, and a weak judicial system, all of which contribute to human rights abuses. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Ecuador addresses a wide range of critical issues, including support for fair and transparent elections, labor rights, judicial reforms and the rule of law, human rights education, and protection and humanitarian assistance for Colombians who have sought refuge in Ecuador. Outreach to a large but often marginalized indigenous community includes new programs to enhance political inclusion and improve civic understanding of key judicial reforms. This human rights and democracy strategy is coordinated with broader regional efforts, as part of the Andean Regional Initiative.

One of the greatest contributors to human rights problems in Ecuador has been a poorly organized, underfunded, and often corrupt judicial system. The U.S. supported projects to strengthen both monitoring of human rights in the judicial system and overall judicial effectiveness. These programs, which received over $100,000 in U.S. support during 2002, provided practical education in human rights to judges, lawyers, university professors, and NGO representatives. In 2001, a new Criminal Procedure Code went into effect that fundamentally changed the structure and process of the judicial system. U.S. programs educated nearly a thousand judicial employees on the new criminal procedure system, trained law professors, provided training and brochures on the new code to NGOs and indigenous communities, and conducted a thorough evaluation of the new code. This evaluation with recommendations has been presented to high-level justice sector officials.

The United States sponsored Ecuadorian participation in human rights, anti-corruption, and administration of justice exchange programs in the U.S., and brought internationally recognized speakers to address Ecuadorian audiences on topics including constitutional law and human rights and incorporation of human rights content in university curricula. Through the Embassy, we publicly supported the work and protection of individual human rights defenders in Ecuador, and improved interagency coordination to ensure thorough human rights vetting of military units proposed for U.S. training and/or support. Human rights training was integrated into all U.S.-supported military exercises and operational training conducted in Ecuador.

The U.S. worked to provide extensive and non-partisan technical support to the 2002 presidential, congressional, and municipal elections in Ecuador. Related programs under a $1.4 million USAID grant included support to election observation efforts, a review of the voter rolls, results transmission, voter education, and civic events that encouraged healthy debate. We also led donor support for the start-up of the first national, non-partisan domestic observation organization, "Participación Ciudadana." Through this organization, we tracked campaign spending and mobilized over 4,000 volunteers to monitor the elections and conduct an independent "quick count" to help verify the accuracy of election results. Over 20 volunteers from our Embassy and the

Consulate in Guayaquil also participated as election monitors for the Organization of American States. These efforts contributed to the most transparent and fair elections in Ecuador's history, which in turn boosted the legitimacy of those elected. Ecuador is a participant in a new regional program to strengthen democratic elements in political parties and improve outreach to marginalized groups.

The U.S. called for reforms in those elements of the Ecuadorian labor code that do not meet international standards. Following a physical attack on striking banana plantation workers in May 2002, our Embassy met with the striking workers and requested the Ecuadorian Government conduct a thorough investigation and prosecute those found responsible for the violence. The U.S. also funded International Labor Organization projects to assess and begin to address a serious child labor problem in Ecuador.

PHOTO:IFES

Finally, the U.S. provided funding to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support refugee centers and assistance for Colombians seeking refuge in Ecuador as well as small but critical development projects in impacted communities along the northern border with Colombia.

GUATEMALA

Guatemala's human rights situation is worrisome, and has deteriorated after significant improvement following the end of the internal conflict in 1996. The 2002-2003 human rights and democracy strategy for Guatemala works to protect human rights, promote the rule of law, and consolidate democracy in Guatemala. It includes diplomatic and programmatic efforts to ensure implementation of the Historical Clarification Commission (HCC) recommendations, strengthen the human rights movement, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law in judicial and security institutions, increase tolerance and respect for ethnic diversity, and institutionalize democracy.

The year 2002 was difficult for Guatemalan human rights activists, with more than 160 threats against them and an escalation in general violence around the country. U.S. officials met with human rights activists throughout the year to show our support for their work and concern for their safety, using our considerable access to local press and influence with the Government to weigh in on high-profile human rights cases,

and to emphasize that democracy and human rights are the cornerstone of U.S. policy towards Guatemala.

U.S. support for reconciliation focused on exhumations of clandestine cemeteries and associated mental health services. 2002 operations were temporarily suspended at the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG), the U.S.-funded organization in charge of exhumations, after multiple death threats forced the director to leave the country for several months. The U.S. held a press conference, in concert with other donor countries and various GOG ministers, calling for Government protection of the organization. U.S. officials also visited FAFG headquarters and exhumation sites to show solidarity with forensic anthropologists and human rights activists, and issued statements of concern and support for this critical work. The U.S. provided security briefings to the entire FAFG staff and assisted informally with their hiring of a security service. Despite these threats and intimidation, the FAFG soldiered on. With the 60 exhumations completed in 2002, FAFG has now exhumed approximately 250 different sites, including those in areas most affected by the internal conflict.

Throughout 2002, U.S.-funded mental health programs for victims of the internal conflict were expanded beyond family members affected by exhumations to address continuing psychological needs. Funds under the Congressional earmark for victims of torture were used to provide psychological treatment for survivors and victims of torture in coordination with the Ministry of Health, local institutions, and NGOs.

One bright spot during 2002 was the June appointment of a new Human Rights Ombudsman, Sergio Morales. U.S. officials supported the selection process and generated civil society support for this initiative through the U.S. Human Rights program. Morales is the first Ombudsman from civil society and a significant improvement over his predecessor. The U.S. Human Rights Program continued support to the National Movement for Human Rights, a consortium of 74 human rights NGOs, which held its first national congress this year and is working to enhance coordination between 12 regional offices and enhance

PHOTO:IFES

their influence on national policy issues such as Morales' election.

Human rights groups believe clandestine structures with roots in the military and a cadre of retired military officers are behind the threats and intimidation levied against human rights workers. The U.S. worked with human rights activists and government officials throughout the year on a proposal for a special investigative commission; this culminated in a March 13 agreement between the Government and the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman to create a United Nations/Organization of American States-led special commission (CICIACS) to investigate these clandestine groups. The U.S. will continue to provide technical and financial support to human rights NGOs, the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Government as they work to develop and implement CICIACS.

PHOTO: USAID

The United States supported the extension of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) through the end of 2004, concerned that an earlier departure could adversely affect human rights verification. U.S. officials visited MINUGUA and Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) offices monitoring the transition of verification work. MINUGUA and PDH representatives alike noted the need for additional training of Guatemalan professionals and the still-weak capacity of institutions slated to take over MINUGUA's responsibilities. The U.S. supported MINUGUA's efforts to develop a national strategy on resource-sharing with domestic actors and worked to strengthen links between the auxiliary offices of the PDH and the human rights NGOs in the regions most affected by the internal conflict.

Strengthening justice in Guatemala is fundamental to our human rights strategy. The U.S. opened 11 Justice Centers in different departments (provinces), supported indigenous language translators, created a special victims' assistance unit within the Public Ministry, and strengthened judicial and university training programs. The Centers provide access to justice for traditionally marginalized groups and work on region-specific programs with civil society. The rule of law was also supported through visible U.S. presence at all public human rights trials in Guatemala City, including high-level attendance at both the Bishop Gerardi and Myrna Mack trials and appeals, and through frequent meetings with plain-

tiffs, lawyers and prosecutors, and supporting judges in these cases.

Our Civil Society program supports the efforts of two NGO coalitions to combat racism and discrimination in both urban and rural areas. PAQ'UCH, one of these coalitions, has maintained productive dialogue with the GOG since early 2002 and participated in the last Consultative Group meeting. PAQ'UCH was instrumental in the establishment of the Presidential Commission Against Racism and Discrimination of Indigenous Peoples. UTZIL, the second coalition, is developing the "Pluricultural Society" program, using workshops, seminars, and cultural activities to raise public awareness about ethnic discrimination. On Columbus Day, UTZIL hosted a successful all-day event at the National Palace of Culture showcasing indigenous customs. Additional civil society programs are supported at all levels, including multiyear assistance to domestic violence programs, local governance initiatives, and special development programs for poor rural communities. These local programs also supported greater grassroots awareness of human rights and of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

The United States actively monitors threats to workers rights, including threats against and murders of union members and leaders, and works to ensure compliance with labor conditions in U.S. benefit programs and trade agreements. We fund Solidarity Center training for labor rights groups and unions, work to help resolve disputes where appropriate, and encourage efforts to harmonize national legislation with International Labor Organization commitments.

The United States continued to combat trafficking in persons in Guatemala through a variety of programs, including humanitarian support to victims of trafficking, a shelter for women victims of trafficking at Tecun Uman, and preventative public information campaigns.

HAITI

A significant political impasse and political violence rising out of the controversial results of the May 2000 legislative and local elections pose serious threats to democracy in Haiti. This situation is aggravated by endemic corruption, impunity, and deteriorating economic and social conditions. The 2002-2003 U.S.

PHOTO: IFES

human rights and democracy strategy for Haiti focuses on promoting the rule of law (including steps to combat the impunity enjoyed by human rights violators), encouraging Government action to combat the trafficking of children, fostering an environment where Haitian citizens can enjoy political freedom, and strengthening local capacity to monitor human rights situations and protect victims.

The U.S. promoted the rule of law in Haiti through frequent high-level meetings and public statements that emphasized promotion of an independent judiciary and police enforcement of court orders, including the arrest of criminals with outstanding warrants and the release of those still in detention despite valid release orders. The U.S. urged an end to Government encouragement of "zero tolerance" vigilantism, and voiced concern at impunity for human rights violations by notorious figures such as Ronald Camille and Amiot Metayer. To promote better professional relations between often threatened journalists and the legal community, the highest ranking Haitian-American judge in Florida moderated U.S.-sponsored discussions on accountability, public service orientation, public oversight and transparency, performance standards, and the importance of press and judicial impartiality. The sessions closed with a commitment by participants to greater media access to judicial processes and better media reporting on working conditions that hamper the legal community. Through the International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES), the United States also conducted seminars and workshops for more than 40 civil society organizations advocating rule of law and judicial independence during the year; this program has already resulted in the formation of a new federation of bar associations.

Child labor in Haiti, especially internal and external trafficking of children as domestic workers or "restaveks," is a serious human rights and labor concern. The United States strongly encouraged the Government of Haiti to fight such trafficking in persons, resulting in the introduction of a new law prohibiting child trafficking. The U.S. also funded several key programs targeting the problem. These included a joint International Labor Organization (ILO)/International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) project on child labor, whose director participated in the February 2003 global conference on trafficking in Washington, which highlighted new strategies and methods to raise public awareness and work with local officials to eliminate the problem. Supported by additional U.S. funding, UNICEF research worked to identify the means and methods used to traffic Haitian children to the Dominican Republic for domestic servitude or agricultural labor, while the National Coalition for Haitian Rights' New York Office began an educational campaign to eliminate local support for the practice — including enhanced parental awareness — and to rescue mistreated children from abusive work situations.

The U.S. International Visitors Program sent more than 70 attorneys, civil society leaders, journalists, scholars, government

officials, and NGO representatives from Haiti to attend policy development, human rights practices and advocacy, women's rights, and conflict resolution seminars in the United States. An estimated 800 Haitians benefited from follow-on programs implemented by International Visitors participants, including a weeklong series of lectures on human rights and a two-day forum on conflict resolution that drew crowds of civil society representatives from one of the poorest and most violent slums in Haiti. Ongoing demonstrations of U.S. support for the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms included the Ambassador's personal and public delivery of the Country Report on Human Rights Practices to a prominent human rights non-governmental organization (NGO), the Platform for Human Rights, and visits to prisons and the homes of victims to monitor conditions and obtain personal testimony regarding human rights violations.

Working through the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, the United States has encouraged the Government, civil society groups, and American and Haitian NGOs to strengthen and enhance political party development. These programs have included the development of the civic action website called "Haiti - Get Involved," training on political opinion polling, and the founding of a resource center to document and disseminate anti-corruption policies and the best practices of state and private entities.

PERU

Emerging from a decade of authoritarian government, Peru is in the process of democratic transformation, with growing recognition of press freedoms and the role of civil society. President Toledo has affirmed that strengthening democracy and protecting human rights are priorities. However, continued judicial inefficiency and corruption, impunity for public security forces engaged in illegal extrajudicial killings and torture, and poor to harsh prison conditions contributed to human rights abuses in some areas. The 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy for Peru addresses a wide range of critical issues, including significant support for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, fair and transparent regional and municipal elections, human rights and democracy education, and the restructuring and reform of government and public security forces. Outreach to civil society included an innovative program to promote a culture of lawfulness in public schools and a series of ongoing democracy and anti-corruption discussions including both government and civil society participants. This human rights and democracy strategy is coordinated with broader regional efforts as part of the Andean Regional Initiative.

One of the greatest contributors to human rights problems in Peru has been a partisan, inefficient, and corrupt judiciary, coupled with lack of due process and the use of excessive and illegal force by public security forces. Several key programs targeted these areas of concern. First, a model curriculum for junior high students, based on living within a culture of lawfulness, was adapted to Peru in coordi-

nation with the country's Ministry of Education. This school-based training program is now in its second year. Second, a program to support the Government's restructuring of the police and military is underway, implemented by contracted U.S. law enforcement experts and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). This includes the establishment and training of a police Internal Affairs Group to investigate allegations of corruption and human rights violations, and support to human rights training of police officers. Through the Embassy, we also improved interagency coordination to ensure thorough human rights vetting of military and police units proposed for U.S. training and/or support.

Key to a successful democratic transition in Peru is public awareness of human rights abuses of the past, and the quest for both justice and national reconciliation. To this end, the U.S. is the largest single donor to Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC has a mandate to analyze the political, social, and cultural conditions that fostered an era of violence between May 1980 and November 2000. During this period more than 25,000 persons were killed and an estimated 6,089 disappeared. While the Commission has no authority to prosecute human rights offenders, it works to clarify abuses of human rights committed by terrorists and the State; locate the victims or their remains; determine individual or institutional responsibility for violations; propose a system of reparations for the victims' families; recommend institutional, legal, and educational reforms; and propose initiatives to advance peace, the rule of law, national reconciliation, and democracy. In addition to direct and indirect financial support to the TRC, the U.S. has declassified and released thousands of pages of pertinent documents requested by the Commission. We also supported the vital work of the Peruvian Human Rights Coordinator, including assistance programs for identified victims of torture.

PHOTO:IFES

The U.S. promoted government reform and decentralization with a variety of programs. These included technical assistance and U.S. monitors for November 2002 regional and municipal elections, support for the public defender's office, electoral reform support, and programs to enhance congressional and judicial reforms, including technical assistance to the legislature. Public outreach and education efforts included an international visitors program on human rights and judicial reform, a series of

ongoing de-mocracy and anti-corruption meetings with government officials and civil society participants, and public video conferences with U.S. and Peruvian experts discussing democratic transitions and domestic violence issues. The U.S. has supported modernization of the labor ministry and the improvement and dissemination of core labor standards. Finally, a series of appearances by a distinguished American guest speaker on civil rights and the African-American cultural identity was of particular interest to an often-neglected Afro-Peruvian audience.

VENEZUELA

Venezuela's political and social divisions were exacerbated this year by a lengthy national strike, inflammatory political rhetoric, and confrontational Government statements that frequently led to violence against perceived political opponents, labor leaders, and the media. Public confidence in democratic institutions was further eroded by widespread police abuse of detainees, as well as corruption and inefficiency in the judicial and law enforcement systems that has spurred a disturbing rise in vigilante justice. In this environment, the 2002-2003 U.S. human rights and democracy strategy focused primarily on strengthening key civil society institutions, encouraging dialogue (including public and official awareness of human rights and the rule of law), and opposing civil violence and extra-constitutional changes in government. This human rights and democracy strategy is coordinated with broader regional security and humanitarian efforts, as part of the Andean Regional Initiative.

Growing and potentially violent political polarization between supporters and opponents of President Hugo Chavez is one of the greatest threats to democracy and human rights in Venezuela. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. promotes democratic stability and strengthens key institutions in Venezuela with a variety of democracy-oriented projects, implemented through small grants to non-governmental organizations. With $2.44 million in these 2003 grants, we support key objectives including conflict management, transparency in government, anti-corruption, improved civil-military relations, union outreach to informal workers, and a strengthened civil society including local government, justices of the peace, education associations, and labor unions.

The U.S., as a member of the Friends of the Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General's Mission for Venezuela, continues to support the OAS Secretary General's efforts to foster dialogue between the Government and the opposition and to achieve the peaceful, constitutional, democratic and electoral resolution in Venezuela called for in OAS Permanent Council Resolution 833.

In the wake of a series of violent attacks that followed official criticism of the media, the U.S. renewed its public support for freedom of speech and an independent and impartial press. The U.S. met repeatedly with government officials to promote human rights and freedom of association, and to express our concern at armed attacks on anti-government de-monstrators, journalists, and human rights defenders.

U.S. assistance to the Venezuelan military integrated training on human rights and civil-military relations in all military assistance and ensured, through a strict vetting process, that no human rights abuser benefited from U.S. training or assistance.

The United States provided funding to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to enhance support to critical new offices and volunteers on the border with Colombia. With this assistance, UNHCR also hopes to initiate a refugee registry system by the end of 2003. UNHCR indicates that between 20,000 and 50,000 Colombians "of concern" now reside in Venezuela. Despite the lack of official Government recognition of status or implementing legislation to facilitate refugee claims, undocumented Colombians continue to seek economic stability and refuge in Venezuela. Response to the humanitarian needs of these refugees often falls to members of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working along the Venezuelan border with Colombia. The Embassy selected seven of these human rights defenders for human rights training and exchange programs in the U.S. this year. Another project brought Venezuelan judges to the U.S. to study the administration of justice and rule of law.

Additional U.S. programs trained local immigration officials to prevent alien smuggling and trafficking in persons through Venezuelan ports of entry, and promoted public awareness of the rights of children, adolescents and girls.

2002 HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

Assistant Secretary Lorne W. Craner and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor are pleased to announce the selection of **Ms. Laura Engelbrecht** of Embassy Kinshasa and **Mr. Mark Lambert** of Embassy Beijing and as co-winners of this year's Award for Exceptional Achievement in the Field of Human Rights and Democracy. Ms. Engelbrecht and Mr. Lambert were selected from an impressive group of candidates nominated by their ambassadors in a year in which issues of democracy and human rights moved even further to the forefront of the foreign policy process. The winners will receive awards of $1,500 each, as well as insertion of an appropriate acknowledgement in their personnel files.

In the challenging human rights environment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, **Laura Engelbrecht** demonstrated perseverance, courage and creativity in shedding light on human rights abuses in previously underreported areas. Ambassador Hooks cited Ms. Engelbrecht for her work in pressing the Government for judicial reforms and her expertise on the Congolese judicial system. Her close relationship with the NGO and UN communities led her to travel to rebel-controlled territory under dangerous conditions. Ms. Engelbrecht was commended for her reporting on rape as a weapon of war. She supplied insightful analysis regarding U.S. political and financial leverage in the fight to protect human rights. Her demarche to the leader of a rebel group responsible for the Kisangani massacres and her refutation of the Rwandan government's denial of responsibility for abuses committed in the eastern Congo were exceptional.

Mark Lambert was recognized by Ambassador Randt for his sheer energy, passion and commitment to fostering democratic change in China. A highly respected and trusted interlocutor with NGOs, religious groups, Deprtment of State offices and bureaus, and Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, Mr. Lambert facilitated communication and dialogue between these groups and the Embassy. His policy initiatives were significant in securing the freedom of political prisoners. Mr. Lambert assisted with the establishment of America's first rule-of-law program in China. He created and is the acknowledged leader of a human rights roundtable in Beijing that includes representatives from 12 countries. He energized constituent posts to contribute effectively to the Mission's human rights agenda through his own example and outreach efforts. Mr. Lambert accomplished these tasks in the face of aggressive harassment and surveillance by police.

Choosing winners of this year's award was made difficult by the number of superior candidates, all of whom deserve the State Department's praise and gratitude.

In Laos, **Greg Chapman** of Embassy Vientiane was cited for his work to protect religious freedom and abuses against the Hmong minority. He demonstrated a continued American commitment to the protection of vulnerable groups.

John Cushing of Embassy Seoul achieved significant and concrete results in his attempts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP), chairing an embassy TIP task force. His work helped the Republic of Korea to significantly improve its efforts against TIP.

David Gehrenbeck of Embassy Yerevan made extraordinary contributions to the fight against corruption and the promotion of free trade in Armenia. His work demonstrates that the promotion of sound economics contributes to the creation of a climate amenable to democracy and the institutionalization of human rights.

In Southeast Asia, **Tobias Glucksman** of Embassy Phnom Penh worked doggedly to combat government attempts to dilute labor protections and negotiated regulations protecting union leaders.

John Godfrey of Embassy Ashgabat developed an outstanding set of foreign contacts, furthering his work regarding detainments, jailings, and mistreatment of prisoners. He also led a successful effort to prevent the deportation of a democracy activist.

Greg Hicks of Embassy Manama worked to further rights and protections for women. In Bahrain, Mr. Hicks expanded contacts among leading women to work for the protection of women's rights and labor opportunities.

Stewart Tuttle of Embassy Bogota demonstrated insight, confidence and courage in his work to expose the efforts of paramilitaries to target human rights workers. He successfully oversaw a program that brought threatened labor leaders to the U.S. for training, an action that undoubtedly saved lives.