



Democratic Accountability Strengthened



USAID works with civil society organizations, governments, the private sector and local volunteers to address the sources of stress in communities and alleviate tensions through innovative partnerships and facilitated dialogues.



USAID is supporting an increasingly vibrant civil society in Jordan.

OVERVIEW

Jordan is pursuing political reforms to promote greater democratic accountability and transparency, political pluralism, and strengthen civil society. These efforts are expected to enhance Jordan’s long-term prospects for stability and prosperity.

Political reforms to date include the passage of the national decentralization and municipalities laws, amendments to the elections and political parties laws, the creation of a National Integrity Strategy to fight corruption and increase transparency, eased requirements for public demonstrations, restrictions on the jurisdiction of the State Security Court over civilians, the establishment of a Constitutional Court. The last parliamentary elections held in 2013 were judged “credible” by international observers. The 2016 Parliamentary elections will be the first after significant changes to laws affecting the electoral process, from the formation of political parties and candidate lists, to the establishment of constituent boundaries. The electoral cycle will continue in 2017 to cover municipal elections and elections for governorate councils; new bodies at the governorate level.

CHALLENGES

Despite this progress, challenges remain regarding political participation, freedom of the press, the status of women, and the decreasing legislative space for civil society. Institutions responsible for good governance lack the capacity to respond fully to citizens’ needs. Citizen participation is limited, particularly among women, youth, and people with disabilities. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media exercise weak political and social influence, further hampering citizen participation. Consequently, Jordanians enjoy few opportunities to provide input on issues affecting their daily lives.

Many communities in Jordan contend with the effects of regional volatility and demographic changes, as well as transitions associated with domestic policy reform, deteriorating economic conditions, and the influx of significant numbers of Syrian refugees. These result in increased strains on critical services and infrastructure, and a rise in community tensions.

USAID continues to support the Government of Jordan’s goal of a more inclusive government—especially for women and youth—while promoting the rule of law, media freedoms, anti-corruption activities, and civil society.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

USAID supports the efforts of Jordan’s government institutions and civil society to advance political reform in multiple arenas: increasing citizen



USAID's Ana Usharek (I Participate) program provides a forum for Jordanian university students to discuss human rights, democracy and political participation.



USAID supports civic initiatives throughout the country. Above, the Royal Marine Conservation Society campaigns for the preservation of Aqaba's beaches.

participation by providing multiple pathways for engagement in decision-making on priority issues, furthering electoral reform, strengthening an independent judiciary, advancing human rights, improving local governments' ability to provide better services, and promoting increased transparency and accountability to combat corruption.

USAID promotes the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in political life and supports community cohesion and enhanced stability and resilience, particularly in communities affected by the influx of refugees.

IMPACT & RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Some USAID-supported achievements include:

- Installed computer automation in all 74 of Jordan's courts with a customized Arabic-language case management system.
- Updated and expanded education for judges at the Judicial Institute, a regional model of excellence.
- Engaged more than 1,300 CSOs in a diverse portfolio of support.
- Created a national network of specialized trainers in advocacy, communication and non-governmental organization (NGO) excellence to build CSO capacity.
- Supported a CSO coalition report on Jordan's compliance with international conventions as a basis for disability rights advocacy.
- Strengthened university curricula on human rights and involved 19,000 youth at 24 universities in discussions sessions and activities on democracy concepts and citizen participation
- Partnered with the Ministry of Education and Madrasati Program to launch a new program targeting 350 high schools to involve students in sessions on democracy, human rights and elections and engage them in initiatives that serve their communities.
- Conducted capacity-building sessions for more than 800 staff members from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and Ministry of Political Development.
- Supported the National Integrity Commission's five-year plan to improve governance and reduce corruption.
- Supported the establishment of the Independent Election Commission; engaged more than 3,000 officials, activists and youth to discuss election reform and standards; established a national coalition of more than 200 CSOs to campaign for improved election procedures and monitor elections.
- Made grants to 19 communities to reduce the pressures created by the influx of displaced Syrians and improve residents' quality of life, resulting in upgraded schools, cleaner neighborhoods, and innovative partnerships with the private sector and civil society to more sustainably address challenges.

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