



# THAILAND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

APRIL 2010



*The Democracy Monument in Bangkok.*

**GOAL:**

- Foster constructive civil society engagement with the Royal Thai Government as a means to building consensus for democratic political processes and mitigating extremism.

**KEY OBJECTIVES:**

- Enhance the capacities of key independent agencies to provide effective government oversight.
- Strengthen the capacity of Thai civil society organizations and the media to ensure citizen engagement in political processes and public policy.
- Support civic reconciliation efforts and reduce the potential for radicalization and escalation of violent conflict in southern Thailand.

**OVERVIEW**

Thailand and the United States recently celebrated 175 years of friendly relations. This partnership is America's oldest diplomatic relationship in



Asia, and is of significant importance to the American people. We have been partners in addressing many of the region's social and security issues, and have worked together on important domestic challenges such as the Asian financial crisis, avian Influenza and H1N1. A stable and democratic Thailand is critical for addressing numerous domestic and regional issues. To further

support Thai democracy, USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) has just launched a five-year, \$30 million (THB 960 million) program to foster constructive civil society engagement and reconciliation in Thailand.

**CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT, RECONCILIATION PROGRAM**

This new program will enhance the role of civil society organizations (CSOs), emphasizing the need to develop cooperative relationships with agencies of the Royal Thai Government (RTG), supporting constructive dialogue and consensus building, and promoting reconciliation in the southern border provinces. USAID will not provide support to political parties or to political movements.

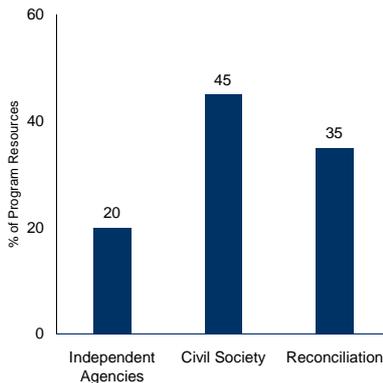
**STRENGTHENING INDEPENDENT AGENCIES**

USAID supports initiatives which provide training and technical cooperation to the staffs of independent government bodies, and initiatives that bring together CSOs, academics, and other Thai experts with independent agencies to address key problems with law and policy. By engaging in technical cooperation with independent agencies and CSOs on key policy issues – and by creating opportunities for dialogue between government entities, CSOs and academics – citizens' interests will be more fully understood, and independent agencies will more effectively carry out constitutionally mandated functions. In addition, civil society will have tangible mechanisms for participating in public policy development and oversight. About 20 percent of the program will focus on this objective.



## THAILAND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM CONTINUED

### CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT & RECONCILIATION PROGRAM



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#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.usaid.gov/rdma/>

#### ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY

USAID provides assistance through technical cooperation and grants to create opportunities for CSOs to organize, advocate and communicate interests with government and with each other. Support also promotes Thai civil society and academic research of policy issues that can lead to constructive dialogue between the RTG and citizens on key policy issues. Assistance may support campaigns promoting media independence, human rights and awareness of democratic political culture, processes and values. By strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of CSOs, expanding opportunities for issue-based programming, and promoting dialogue between citizens and the state, Thai citizens will become more engaged and informed about policy issues. The RTG will also become more informed about civic interests through formal public participation mechanisms and be better positioned to develop public policies that respond to citizens' needs. About 45 percent of the program will focus on this objective.

#### SUPPORTING RECONCILIATION

USAID supports reconciliation efforts both inside and outside the southern border provinces and seeks to strengthen a variety of initiatives that address the causes and consequences of the violent conflict, those affected by the violence, civic education, and community media. By strengthening civic reconciliation activities – such as services addressing the consequences of conflict, human rights awareness and monitoring, and expanding opportunities for civic networking among those in the south and other NGOs across the country – the public demand to resolve the conflict peacefully will increase. The program supports conflict resolution efforts and aims to build trust within communities and between citizens and the state. About 35 percent of the program will focus on this objective.

#### OTHER USAID PROGRAMS IN THAILAND

USAID's other programs in Thailand address numerous regional and transnational issues. These include the responsible use of natural resources; disaster assistance; reduction of the incidence of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; prevention of human and wildlife trafficking; and resolution of political conflict. USAID's programs in Thailand have been profiled in internationally broadcast documentaries on CNN and the Discovery Channel.