



USAID
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LESSONS IN LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT: USAID/DRG's SHIFTING APPROACH

Rule of Law

USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance's (USAID/DRG) long-term emphasis on locally led development has allowed staff from across its subsectors to learn a number of lessons on how to more effectively operationalize this practice over the years. Indeed, the nature of the work undertaken by the DRG Bureau makes locally-led development inextricably linked to much of its programming. This document profiles some of the changes implemented by USAID/DRG's Rule of Law subsector in response to these lessons. It should be noted that the lessons learned highlighted in this document should not be viewed as set in stone, keeping in mind that improving development programming is an ongoing process. A more in depth overview of USAID/DRG's Rule of Law subsector's shifting approach to locally led development and additional documents from this series profiling other USAID/DRG subsectors can be found [here](#).

RULE OF LAW'S SHIFTING APPROACH TO PROGRAM DESIGN



SHIFTING TOWARD A PEOPLE- CENTERED JUSTICE APPROACH

1. Lesson learned: rather than seeking to achieve legitimacy through institutional reform alone, programming aimed to ensure rule of law justice is shared, seen, and experienced by individuals and designed to focus on providing justice for all will ensure that it is more accessible, user-friendly, and sustainable. It will also facilitate USAID's ability to problem-solve widespread and systemic abuses of law, human rights, and corruption more effectively.

2. Lesson learned: in contrast to a top-down approach, approaches to program design that allow for local voices to be heard, acknowledged, analyzed, and responded to facilitate increased partner engagement and trust in the justice systems the program is attempting to strengthen.

3. Lesson learned: program design is more effective when the wider rule of law system is taken into consideration. Sustainable programming is only possible when it occurs within existing systems. These systems must be adequately analyzed and engaged to help uncover hidden social and political dynamics and provide a clearer picture of the key stakeholders and their incentives, supporting greater ownership and better attainment of results.



A GREATER FOCUS ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4. Lesson learned: ensuring proper oversight and transparency efforts in addition to independence is paramount in bolstering a justice system that is legitimate and trusted, and most importantly, is impartial and accessible to the public. When citizens understand rule of law programming and believe they have agency in its delivery, true democratic participation and evolution is possible.

5. Lesson learned: rather than focusing on individual institutions, knowledge sharing and best practices across the entire justice system allows for increased problem-solving capabilities of justice providers and creates a coordinated and effective system of checks and balances.

RULE OF LAW'S SHIFTING APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION



SHIFTING TOWARD INCREASED ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

6. Lesson learned: in line with USAID's locally-centered approach to program implementation, the DRG Bureau is working toward utilizing approaches that better capture the voices of civil society. Programs that recognize a resilient civil society to be intrinsically representative of a well-functioning democracy and judicial system support more sustainable change than ones focused on narrowly advancing specific USAID development priorities by supporting rule of law instrumentally.



SHIFTING TOWARD A GREATER EMPHASIS ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION IN PROGRAMMING DECISIONS

7. Lesson learned: to strengthen the overall resilience and robustness of rule of law programming, a more diverse understanding of the underlying factors affecting the rule of law is necessary. Institutional reform through the introduction of human rights policy or practice cannot be prioritized over activities that may prevent crime and corruption, solve people's every day legal problems, or introduce advocacy campaigns and legal tools to protect civil society and everyday citizens from human rights abuses.

8. Lesson learned: by addressing the root causes of corruption, the USAID/DRG Bureau can administer programming that recognizes the dynamic interplay between the perception of injustice and corruption, and the actual lived experiences of these issues by local stakeholders. Programming is therefore more specifically targeted, impactful, and long-lasting.

RULE OF LAW'S SHIFTING APPROACH TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION



GREATER INTEGRATION OF COLLABORATION, LEARNING, AND ADAPTATION (CLA) IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES

9. Lesson learned: by creating and utilizing an evidence base of rule of law programming, USAID can ensure programming is adaptive, iterative, and better solves contextual problems based on measurable results and experiential learning.

10. Lesson learned: qualitative data is an important tool when attempting to facilitate a bottom-up and localized approach to monitoring and evaluation.