



# Democratic Systems

## United States Embassy in South Africa

### AMERICA INVESTS IN SOUTH AFRICA



*“Americans seek to expand, not the borders of our country, but the realm of liberty.”*

*President George W. Bush  
January 15, 2003*

### BACKGROUND

South Africa’s third peaceful, free and fair election demonstrates remarkable progress in just ten years. The challenge now facing South Africa is to transform a society burdened by four decades of apartheid. The future of South Africa’s hard-won democracy depends on the success of this transformation.

In South Africa, local municipalities are responsible for providing basic services including water, electricity and health care. There is an enormous backlog in the extension of these services to historically disadvantaged communities. Pent-up demand for services that are not being delivered fast enough threatens public support for local government, the very foundation of South Africa’s democracy.

Although the crime rate has stabilized in the past year, South Africa still has one of the highest crime rates in the world and one of the lowest conviction rates. People do not feel safe in their homes, in their cars, or on the streets. This weakens support for South Africa’s democracy.

South Africa’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are meant to act as a partner of government in delivering services to the communities. The government has enacted reforms to the tax code and new laws designed to enable NGOs to help South Africa’s historically disadvantaged communities. However, research shows that many NGOs still do not know how to take advantage of the new laws and continue to struggle to find adequate resources.

### WHAT IS THE U.S. MISSION DOING?

- Providing \$8 million to support a public-private partnership between Business Against Crime, a South African nonprofit association of corporations, and the Department of Justice aimed at improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.
- Training prosecutors in the National Prosecuting Authority to improve the prosecution of corruption cases.
- Funding pilot programs in communities where sexual offenses are common, so case managers and victim assistance officers ensure the speedy processing of sexual offense cases through the courts, and provide legal and medical support to the victims.
- Supporting NGO initiatives that provide victim support services, prepare child victims to testify in court, and monitor cases involving domestic and other forms of violence against women and children, as well as encourage innovative rehabilitation programs to deal separately with first-time young offenders.
- Training officials in one-third of South Africa’s 284 local municipalities in the skills needed to implement the local government statutory framework.
- Funding NGO-led advocacy efforts to further extend tax exemptions for qualifying non-profit organizations and tax deductions for charitable giving.
- Supporting the training of municipal councilors and officials in strategic planning and financial management skills.
- Funding local revenue enhancement campaigns to improve the capacity and means of delivering water, electricity and other vital services to historically disadvantaged communities.

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

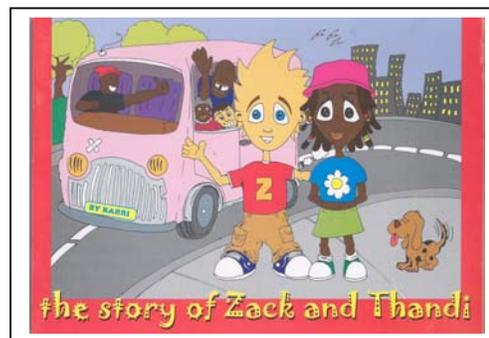
- Crimes are prosecuted more efficiently. The court backlog in criminal cases has been declining by 10% per year since 2002. Sexual offenses in particular are being prosecuted more speedily. In areas where Victim Assistance Officers and Case Monitors are involved, the conviction rate improved to 60% and case cycle time reduced drastically to 6-9 months.
- In the past year, three separate U.S.-supported NGO programs assisted 6,219 battered women to apply for protection orders, and prepared 530 sexually abused children to testify in court.
- The number of NGOs qualified for tax-exempt status has nearly tripled in three years, from 6,637 to 17,223.
- Indiana University, together with South African universities, is doing a train-the-trainers program in legislative drafting.
- Workshops have been held for NGO staff on improving management so they can maximize their efficiency and productivity and improve their ability to raise funds.
- A two-year on-line subscription to the Westlaw database given to the South African Constitutional Court allows access to a comprehensive set of U.S. and international legal precedents. This helps in adjudicating cases.



*A young participant discusses attending a USAID - funded youth empowerment camp about governance.*

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Continue assistance to the Department of Justice to improve court efficiency.
- Continue assistance to the National Prosecuting Authority to increase the rate of conviction, especially for corruption and crimes of violence against women and children.
- Continue support for NGO programs that assist the victims of domestic violence and sexual offenses.



*Cartoon used by Unit for Child Witness Research and Training to help children overcome the fear of testifying.*

- Continue assistance to South Africa's municipalities to improve local government performance in delivering vital services.
- Initiate a program to train reporters in investigative journalism and to assist civil society organizations in improving their anti-corruption watchdog skills.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### U.S. Department of State

<http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy.html>

### U.S. Agency for International Development

<http://www.sh.apc.org/usaisa/ussol.html>

### Local Government

[www.ksp.org.za](http://www.ksp.org.za)

### Criminal Justice

[www.iss.co.za](http://www.iss.co.za)

### Civil Society

[www.thusasang.org.za](http://www.thusasang.org.za)