

## USAID Governance and Communications Program



A woman proudly displays her ink-stained finger after voting in Mali's 2013 Presidential elections.

Photo: Suyene Garcia, USAID/Mali

The current portfolio is designed to reinforce a decentralized system of shared democratic governance by strengthening the capacity of civil society actors, local elected authorities, and communal councils to effectively undertake their roles and responsibilities. Programs also reinforce peace and stability in Northern Mali by increasing public access to quality development information and promoting local development. Activities also support a vibrant civil society in Mali, national and local elections.

**Elections:** Malians, with the support of USAID and rest of the international community, held both presidential and legislative elections in 2013. USAID and partner activities contributed to historically high turnouts of 48.7 percent for

the presidential and 37.9 percent for the legislative elections. The upcoming local elections, currently scheduled for October 2014, are crucial for continuing this successful transition. Local politicians serve as a key link between the Ministries and citizens. Moving forward, USAID's mission in Mali will work with government entities, political parties, and civil society groups to ensure that upcoming local and regional elections are credible, transparent, and inclusive. We will continue to train officials within the three electoral management bodies to improve their performance and to resolve issues identified in previous elections. We will support election stakeholders to develop and implement electoral reforms that will make the process more transparent, easier to manage, and inclusive. We will work with civil society watchdog organizations to monitor the reform process and the elections themselves to make sure that they are transparent and free of fraud. Working with all of the stakeholders, we will make sure that previously disadvantaged populations, including youth, women, and returning refugees have opportunities to participate in the upcoming elections as voters, candidates, or observers.

**Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership:** These activities in Mali mitigate longstanding drivers of instability characterized by economic under-development, state weakness, and perceptions of political marginalization. The program targets conflict prevention and mitigation, youth engagement and employment, community governance, and civic engagement, with an emphasis on national reconciliation. Mali's Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Program has traditionally focused on countering terrorism and violent extremism in the three northern regions of Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu. Due to the inaccessibility of these areas, USAID is currently exploring options to implement programming to targeted beneficiaries in southern regions of the country. Populations in areas bordering Mauritania and Timbuktu are susceptible to violent extremism and face additional pressure to join rebel and Islamist fighters and to participate in illegal activities such as drug trafficking and other illegal smuggling.