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SUCCESS STORY

Supporting Democracy by Equipping Census Offices



Staff members at work in a census office equipped through a grant from USAID/OTI. The grant provided motorbikes, furniture, and other supplies to census offices in seven states in southern Sudan.

The overarching goal of USAID's OTI/Sudan program is to strengthen Sudanese confidence and capacity to address the causes and consequences of the political marginalization, violence, and instability that has plagued the country for nearly 50 years.

Working within the context of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the OTI/Sudan program focuses on promoting the emergence of responsive and effective civil authorities, establishing peaceful dialogue within and among communities, fostering the emergence of an active civil society, increasing the availability of independent information, and protecting vulnerable populations from grave human rights violations and related abuses.

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December 2006 – Under the directive of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Sudan will carry out its first-ever national population census in 2007. The success of the census will be critical to preparations for national and local elections that are to be held no later than summer 2009. The data collected in the census will form the basis for voter rolls and the distribution of seats in the national and state assemblies.

In southern Sudan, the responsibilities for organizing the census lay with the South Sudan Commission for Census, Statistics, and Evaluation (SSCCSE), but the challenges of planning for a census in a country the size of Sudan are staggering, considering the lack of human and financial resources. With support from USAID/Sudan's Democracy and Governance program, the U.S. Census Bureau is providing technical assistance and training to the SSCCSE.

The SSCCSE has an office to collect, compile, analyze, publish, and disseminate statistical information in each of Sudan's seven southern states. However, the offices were ill-equipped, and staff complained about the difficulties they faced trying to carry out their work. To address the resource gap affecting Sudan's census operations, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) provided the SSCCSE offices in the southern states of Upper Nile, Jonglei, Warub, Eastern Equatoria, Central Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and Northern Bahr el Ghazal with basic furniture, equipment, stationery, and motorbikes.

The receipt of this critical equipment proved to be timely, as the SSCCSE is preparing to launch a pilot census in early 2007. According to Western Bahr El Ghazal State Statistics Officer Stephen Andrea, his office was unable to carry out this task until OTI provided the motorbikes that will allow his staff to travel throughout the state to collect data.

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