



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. EMBASSY RANGOON

110 University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Rangoon, Burma

USAID Announces Elections and Political Process Assistance Program

RANGOON, March 8, 2013 -- Today, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a three-year elections and political processes support program in Burma to assist the country in the run-up to general elections slated for 2015.

The announcement came during the first visit by USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah, carrying forward the U.S. commitment to supporting this country's reform process following U.S. President Barack Obama's historic visit in November 2012.

"Our new program will support the deepening of reforms in Burma, particularly the transition to a more democratic and inclusive political system," said Dr. Shah. "The program is part of our commitment to supporting and accelerating democratic reforms to promote rule of law and human rights, transparent governance, and vibrant civil societies that reflect the country's diversity."

The announcement came during meetings with senior government officials in Naypyitaw and Rangoon, including Ministers in the President's Office U Aung Min and U Soe Thein, as well as Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Thura U Shwe Mann. In pledging more support, Dr. Shah also stressed the U.S. commitment to supporting the peace process and the importance of unhindered humanitarian access to vulnerable populations.

The \$11 million program aims to assist the government in improving electoral administration to ensure free, fair, honest and credible elections in 2015; promote voter education; provide parliamentary strengthening assistance; and support political party development.

Key to the new program is civil society engagement, including a deliberate effort to strengthen the organizational capacity of local civil society organizations to support and sustain their role as effective development partners in engaging with members of parliament.

In separate meetings with the Ministers of Agriculture and Health, Administrator Shah reinforced USAID's commitment to working together and ensuring an inclusive approach to development that accounts for the will of the people. Dr. Shah discussed findings from a recent USAID-funded diagnostic of food security issues and announced USAID's recent accession to the membership of the 3MDG Board focusing on promoting maternal and child health.



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Dr. Shah's trip builds on the joint U.S.-Burma Partnership for Democracy, Peace and Prosperity that President Obama launched during his visit last year. The Partnership prioritizes development activities that promote inclusion, transparency, accountability, and local empowerment.

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