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## Evaluation of the Impact of USAID Democracy and Governance Programming



Pamela Paxton  
Associate Professor of  
Sociology  
The Ohio State  
University

Principal Investigator: Pamela Paxton

In 2001, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) spent more than \$800 million in more than 70 countries to promote democratic institutions and good governance. However, until recently this work had not been adequately evaluated.

Two years ago, Paxton and Rumi Morishima undertook just such an evaluation. Previous studies had not found a link between foreign aid and democratization or human rights. However, Paxton and Morishima looked specifically at USAID money directed to democracy development from 1993 to 2001, finding that it did have a positive affect.

The next step was to probe these results more deeply. Specifically, Paxton wanted to know how much of the positive affect was from selection bias. In other words, did USAID choose to fund only "good bets" for democratization? And how much of the democratization was due to USAID support over what would have happened anyway?

This continuing evaluation has been carried out by a team of researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Pittsburgh. However, Paxton was part of the original team that suggested USAID bring academic researchers in to evaluate its efforts. She also helped guide the researchers' work with data kept by USAID but until then unstudied.

The PDF version of the final report, "[Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building: Results of a Cross-National Quantitative Study,](#)" found that USAID support has a significant impact on democracy, over and above the normal dynamics of the country and controlling for selection bias. It is posted on the USAID website under Democracy and Governance.

Columbus, OH 43201

Phone: 614.292.1681

Fax: 614.292.2407

Email: [mershoncenter@osu.edu](mailto:mershoncenter@osu.edu)