



IFES supports citizens' right to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to promote sustainable democracy.

IFES in Myanmar

The 2015 national elections in Myanmar were hailed as the most credible in the nation's history and a critical step in Myanmar's peaceful transition. Years of effort by the Union Election Commission (UEC), civil society and other stakeholders led to significant improvements in Myanmar's electoral process including voter education, voter registration, and polling and counting procedures. As a result of these efforts, the 2015 elections were seen by voters, parties, international and domestic observers, civil society and media as inclusive, credible, and transparent. With support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the UEC has improved information sharing, increased transparency and built confidence in the integrity and inclusivity of the electoral process. IFES continues to support the UEC and Myanmar civil society organizations (CSOs) as they consolidate improvements made during the 2015 electoral cycle and build on lessons learned, paving the way for the 2017 by-elections and 2020 national elections.

In Myanmar, IFES focuses on the following key areas:

Advancing the UEC's technical capabilities

IFES provides international electoral expertise and best practices to the UEC on key aspects of Myanmar's electoral process including electoral and legal reform, voter registration, election dispute resolution and polling and counting procedures. Prior to 2015, Myanmar's voter list was decentralized, hand-written and outdated, leading to significant criticism. To improve this system, IFES provided support to the UEC's efforts to develop and implement the first-ever digitized and centralized voter database, which includes over 34 million entries. In partnership with the UEC, IFES also trained over 2,000 data entry officers and assisted with the UEC's 2015 nationwide voter displays and the 2017 by-elections display. IFES supported the UEC's poll worker preparation efforts, resulting in a series of manuals and checklists including a *Polling Manual*, *Operations Checklist* and *Electoral Dispute Resolution Manual* as well as enhanced integrity measures such as ballot box seals and inking fingers to prevent repeat voting. Additionally, the UEC convenes a UEC Legal Working Group to develop recommendations on revising the legal and regulatory framework based on international standards and best practices. In coordination with UEC, IFES also implements legal reform roundtables, providing a platform for discussion on legal reform for crucial electoral stakeholders.

Developing the capacity of UEC staff

IFES continues to support the UEC to develop and implement trainings for its national and sub-commission staff, including the development of manuals, factsheets, vinyl posters with step-by-step procedures and training videos. This includes operational and polling worker trainings for over 650,00 UEC staff and polling station members for the 2015 elections. In September 2016, the UEC, in partnership with IFES, developed and implemented an induction training for 250 new UEC staff to launch the UEC Election Professionals Program. IFES also supports the UEC to maintain a Training Center in Naypyitaw that regularly brings together members of CSOs with the UEC to address issues of transparency, accountability, and inclusion.

Supporting civic and voter education to empower political participation

For the 2015 elections, the UEC developed and implemented a national voter education plan to motivate individuals to vote and provide information about how and where to vote. The voter education plan included a mass media voter education program using television, radio, billboard advertisements, SMS and social media to inform voters about the electoral process and the importance of voting. Through regional meetings and grants to 14 CSOs, IFES produced and distributed 3,486,065 pamphlets and 41,048 posters, translated materials into 16 ethnic languages and trained over 200,000 individuals prior to Election Day. IFES also conducted nationwide pre- and post-election surveys, which informed the UEC's voter and civic education work. As a result of these

voter education efforts, the percentage of voters who felt they had a great deal or fair amount of information about the elections jumped from 21 percent to 75 percent. Following the election, IFES partnered with seven local CSOs to develop and pilot “Model Citizen,” a civic education program targeting traditionally marginalized groups including women, youth, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities. As of September 2016, the civic education program reached over 13,000 individuals in 95 townships and six internally displaced persons’ camps. CSOs, participants and the UEC acknowledged that the principles and concepts were important to increasing civic knowledge and engagement of Myanmar citizens. IFES continues to implement voter education activities for the 2017 by-elections.

Enhancing the capacity of electoral stakeholders to engage with the UEC

The UEC hosts regular multi-stakeholder workshops with political parties and CSOs to foster an inclusive approach to the electoral process. These meetings play an important role in increasing the confidence in the electoral process, improve coordination on electoral issues and provide a forum in which to share electoral resource documents such as laws, factsheets and manuals. National and regional stakeholder meetings have been attended by more than 350 CSOs and are regularly attended by all registered political parties. Electoral stakeholders are also consulted to assess the electoral process, produce recommendations for improving it and advocate for reform in the next cycle. Additionally, IFES supports the UEC and CSOs to take part in study trips to key elections and referendums around the world, including the United Kingdom referendum on European Union membership and the 2016 U.S. elections. IFES also supported the launch of the UEC’s Information Center, a venue where media, CSOs and political parties can find electoral resources and a training space for journalists and CSOs.

Increasing inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups in the electoral process

To support the inclusion of marginalized groups including persons with disabilities, women, ethnic minorities and youth to become engaged in the electoral process, IFES partners with local CSOs to build their capacity to support the electoral process. For example, IFES supports local partner Yaung Chi Thit to implement “She Leads,” a women’s leadership program training over 1,500 women in 17 locations to become leaders in their communities. The Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILI) has hosted a cascade of advocacy trainings for disabled person’s organizations, collaborated with the UEC to offer accessible polling stations at 18 locations in 15 townships across six states and regions, and overseen eight advocacy trainings attended by 586 persons with disabilities.

For more on IFES Myanmar, please visit <http://www.ifes.org/myanmar>.

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