



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 the Americas

## Overview

Since 1987, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has worked alongside government officials, election management bodies (EMBs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Americas to promote transparency and accountability in electoral processes, increased civic engagement and the inclusion of frequently marginalized groups in political life. Through activities that range from technical assistance with electoral operational procedures to training diverse leaders, advocates and informed citizens, IFES supports sustainable improvements to democratic institutions. A key element of IFES' approach is fostering greater horizontal cooperation and peer-to-peer exchange among democratic institutions in the Americas region.

## Current Programs

### Guatemala: *Electoral Governance and Reforms Project*

IFES' "Electoral Governance and Reforms Project" is a three-year initiative begun in 2017 through the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Working alongside the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and other electoral stakeholders, IFES aims to support the implementation of Guatemala's 2016 Electoral and Political Parties Law (LEPP). These collaborative efforts strengthen electoral institutions like the TSE and political parties and increase civic participation and engagement. IFES worked with the TSE on creating new special units for media monitoring and campaign oversight, addressing the TSE's new responsibilities under the LEPP. IFES also accompanies the TSE's efforts to improve campaign finance enforcement and electoral security ahead of the June 2019 elections. IFES and the TSE seek to promote the inclusion of Guatemala's frequently marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, indigenous groups and women.

IFES started working with the TSE in 2010, providing technical assistance for the implementation of more effective and transparent results tabulation. In 2014, IFES began a project to prevent electoral violence and enhance the political and civil rights of the LGBTQ community. IFES is committed to facilitating dialogue between the Guatemalan government and CSOs, providing training workshops for CSOs and supporting their advocacy for key legal and political reforms. IFES signed a Memorandum of Collaboration with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities in April 2019, reaffirming a strong partnership initiated in 2011 and articulating a collaborative path of action toward common goals, including full and active participation of Guatemalans with disabilities in political and electoral processes.

### Dominican Republic: *Promoting Political Leadership for Youth with Disabilities*

In 2017, IFES began its "Promoting Political Leadership for Youth with Disabilities" project, supported by USAID's Disability Fund. The project cultivates the leadership talents and civic knowledge of youth with disabilities through activities that include a semester-long advocacy course, internships at government bodies, advocacy meetings on disability rights and networking with CSOs. IFES is committed to the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in elections and democratic processes, particularly ahead of Dominican elections in 2020. IFES also collaborates with local disabled people's organizations (DPOs) to enhance their organizational and administrative capacity.

Over the last three decades, IFES has continually cultivated partnerships in the Dominican Republic. A 2011-14 USAID-funded project, "Mainstreaming Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes," allowed IFES, in partnership with CEPPS, to work toward breaking barriers to full participation in Dominican democratic processes. IFES worked closely with the Dominican Central Electoral Board (JCE), political parties and candidates to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities in elec-

toral processes. IFES also partnered with a Dominican DPO to increase political awareness through public information campaigns, disability rights policy platforms and leadership training. IFES' work with the JCE has additionally included peer-to-peer exchanges in which the JCE shares knowledge with other EMBs in the region.

### **El Salvador: *Promoting Support for Free, Fair and Transparent Presidential Elections***

In 2018, IFES launched "Support for Free, Fair and Transparent Presidential Elections in El Salvador" through CEPPS. The one-year, USAID-funded project works with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) to increase the transparency of the 2019 Salvadoran electoral processes and ensure the quality of electoral information technology systems, including results transmission. IFES' electoral technology experts worked closely with the TSE to ensure that the electoral results transmission system was fully prepared for Election Day, and, during post-election lessons learned workshops, to proactively begin the next electoral cycle. In 2019, the TSE overcame the challenges of past elections and peacefully transmitted preliminary election results after polls closed.

IFES first began its work in El Salvador in 2003 as part of its "Global Initiative to Enfranchise Citizens with Disabilities." IFES partnered with the Salvadoran Cooperative Association of Pro-Integral Rehabilitation Independent Group and the TSE to train and accredit more than 100 Salvadorans with disabilities to monitor legislative and municipal elections and identify structural and administrative barriers to full participation.

### **Haiti: *Elections and Political Processes Support Activity***

Over the last 30 years, IFES has provided continued support to Haiti's democratic processes. In 2017, IFES began implementing the "Elections and Political Processes (EPP) Support Activity," a five-year program funded by USAID through CEPPS. Under the EPP project, IFES' supports the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), supplemented by work with civil society and media on oversight and inclusion. IFES' support to the CEP is multifaceted, focusing on both long-term institution building and more immediate election process support. In collaboration with IFES, the CEP has recently taken steps toward reform, striving to improve Haiti's electoral framework through laws and dispute resolution mechanisms that promote transparency and inclusion leading up to and after the October 2019 elections. The CEP continues to face significant obstacles, however, in building its technical capacity amid political gridlock, a fragile security situation and voters' entrenched lack of trust in government. The EPP program activity thus aims to build greater confidence in electoral processes by supporting Haitian-led efforts to strengthen electoral institutions, political parties and civil society.

### **Panama: *Media Training on Election Coverage***

In 2019, IFES returned to Panama with its media training, "Electoral Coverage in an Era of Disinformation," implemented in partnership with the Electoral Tribunal and funded by the United States Embassy in Panama. Led by international experts in journalism and electoral analysis, the workshop provided a comparative lens and practical approach to providing tools to journalists tackling disinformation throughout the electoral cycle. Workshop topics included international norms that affect election coverage, journalistic standards during campaigns, planning election coverage based on the electoral cycle and comparative examples, using survey information, communicating candidate platforms, navigating social media, inclusive political reporting and more. The workshop was a model for future IFES work with the media and addressing disinformation in elections.

### **Mexico: *Enhancing Citizen Participation in Mexico City***

Since 1993, IFES has worked in Mexico in collaboration with the National Electoral Institute (INE) to advance Mexico's democratic processes. IFES has observed electoral processes throughout Mexico, participated in workshops and conferences facilitated by the INE, conducted and applied comparative research activities and promoted implementation of disability rights legislation. With INE funding, IFES conducted an electoral observation of Mexico's largest-ever elections in July 2018. IFES also co-sponsored the INE's Ninth Forum on Latin American Democracy: Challenges to Politics and Democracy in the Digital Era, held in Mexico City on April 4-5, 2019.

In June 2019, IFES began work on its "Enhancing Citizen Participation in Mexico City" activity, funded by the Electoral Institute of Mexico City. The activity seeks to enhance citizen participation in Mexico City through tailored capacity building, contributing to strengthening public participation mechanisms such as civil society electoral observation and participatory budgeting and an international expert mission that will gain greater understanding of best practices in public consultation and participatory budgeting.

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