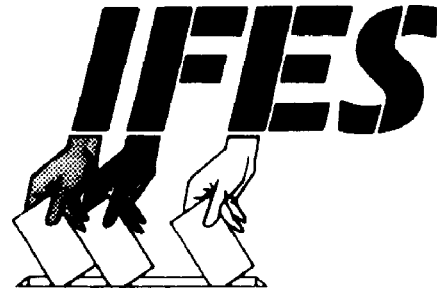


# AMERICAS REPORT



April 1998

## ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN ELECTORAL ORGANIZATIONS (ACEO)

The Founding General Assembly of the Association of Caribbean Electoral Organizations (ACEO) was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, March 30 - April 1, 1998. The conference theme was, "Promoting Access to the Political Process for Citizens with Disabilities." Legislators and disability advocates from the Caribbean, including David Cruz Vélez and Pedro Salamo Pérez from Puerto Rico and Senator Floyd Morris from Jamaica, shared their individual and country experiences. In addition, NGOs, such as Disabled People's International, represented by Lucy Wong-Hernández, and Combined Disabilities Association (Jamaica), represented by Monica Bartley, reported on their efforts to promote access to the political process.

After the presentations on the obstacles to full political participation by persons with disabilities, the participants divided into small working groups in order to foster better understanding of the concepts presented, to allow election officials from the region to interact, and to address issues specific to the topic. These sessions represented the first time that many of the election officials had discussed these issues with their colleagues in the region. These small working groups discussed surveying the accessibility of polling stations and implementing guidelines for the rights of the disabled. The San Juan Declaration on the Political Rights for Persons with Disabilities was unanimously adopted by the delegates, affirming "the need to work with organizations of and for people with disabilities to design and conduct registration, outreach and education campaigns which result in greater participation in election systems of all people."

### Also in this edition:

### Page

Paraguay .....	3
El Salvador .....	4
Peru .....	4
Haiti .....	5



*Juan R. Melecio, President of the State Elections Commission of Puerto Rico, and Richard W. Soudriette, President of IFES hosts to the Founding General Assembly of the ACEO.*

The conference also marked the formal establishment of the ACEO. Twenty-two of the 27 eligible electoral organizations were in attendance; fifteen signed the charter as founding members, and the other seven



*Delegates and other participants to the Founding General Assembly of the ACEO.*

indicated their intention to do so as soon as governmental permission is obtained. The 15 founding members are Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, and US Virgin Islands.

During the course of the conference, the delegates discussed and voted on a draft Charter for the ACEO, followed by a ceremonial signing by the fifteen founding members. In amendments to the charter, the delegates authorized Bermuda to enter as a full member, and designated IFES and the OAS to serve as co-secretariat of the new Association, until such time as a location and funding for a secretariat in the Caribbean can be found. The members discussed the Association's future activities, work plan and internal structure; nominated and elected the five members of its Executive Board; and voted on the ACEO logo.

The five members of the Executive Board, which will direct the Association's activities for the next three years, are William Chin See, Chairman of the Electoral Advisory Committee, Jamaica; Howard Fergus, Supervisor of Elections, Montserrat; Jocelyn Lucas, former Chief Elections Officer, Trinidad and Tobago; Juan Melecio, President of the State Elections

Commission of Puerto Rico; and Raymond Richards, Chairman of the Joint Board of Elections, U.S. Virgin Islands. At its first meeting, on April 1, the Board elected Mr. Chin See as Chairman, and directed IFES and OAS to prepare a work plan and budget for the Association. The ACEO Charter requires a General Assembly to be held at least every three years, and the Board to meet at least once a year.

The Founding General Assembly of the ACEO was financed by the International Foundation for Election Systems, the United States Agency for International Development, the Organization for American States, and the United Nations Division for Social Policy and Development. Ten vendors of election-related equipment and services exhibited at the conference, which brought in additional funding. In addition, the following organizations and institutions were represented as observers: Center for Electoral Assistance and Development (CAPEL), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the U.S. Federal Elections Commission (FEC), Honduran National Electoral Tribunal, Citizen's Action for Free and Fair Elections (CAFFE-Jamaica), Federal Elections Institute (IFE-Mexico), Electoral Tribunal of the Judicial Power of the Federation (TRIFE-Mexico), Electoral Tribunal (Panama), United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, and the International Association of Clerks,

Recorders, Election Officials, and Treasurers (IACREOT).

## PARAGUAY

As Paraguay prepares for critical presidential and congressional elections on May 10, IFES' 18-month-old technical assistance project moved into high gear. Among the activities under way:

A) *Civic Motivation Campaign:* This campaign is targeting groups who are under-represented among traditional voters, particularly women and youth, and those in rural areas. The campaign will reach all 17 departments of the country and will target almost 90 per cent of these non-voters. The campaign started on April 7 and is being carried out by a group of nine local NGO's strongly committed to the promotion of democracy and free and fair elections, funded by sub-grants from IFES.

B) *Support to the Electoral Tribunal in Training of Pollworkers:* IFES is providing technical assistance to the electoral tribunal in the training of pollworkers, including the design and production of educational materials. This campaign will train over 60,000 polworkers for approximately 10,500 polling stations. The campaign is especially important in view of new voting procedures introduced by the electoral tribunal in recent months.

C) *Assistance to the Tribunal's Information and Communications Systems:* IFES is providing short-term technical assistance, through international consultants, in the upgrading of the Tribunal's computer network and its security, training the tribunal's information systems personnel, evaluating election day dry-runs, and providing crisis management training.

D) *Civic Fora:* Political candidates will be invited to present and explain their views on the issues to the public in fora organized by IFES both before and after the elections.

E) *Technical Evaluation Team:* Experts on electoral processes from Canada, Honduras, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Uruguay arrived in Paraguay on April 19 for a month to work in the field giving technical assistance to local electoral tribunals on a number of issues. The six-member group, led by former Canadian Ambassador John Graham, will also meet with politicians, academicians, government officials, media and the public in order to obtain a balanced view of the campaign, before, during and after the elections. They will prepare a detailed report to the Paraguayan Tribunal and to USAID.

F) *Journalist Seminars:* In collaboration with the Paraguayan Journalists Association, IFES organized a series of seminars and round tables entitled Journalism and the Elections. IFES consultant Dr. Silvio Waisbord, from Rutgers University, traveled to Asuncion to lead a number of seminars, round table discussions and workshops on ethics and election coverage. The seminars took place at the *Universidad Nacional de Asuncion* and were attended by communications professionals, academics, university students, and public in general.

G) *Transmission of Results:* IFES Consultant Jorge Tirado finished his initial technical assessment and he and Consultant Armando Hernandez are working full speed on the implementation of the Transmission of Preliminary Elections Results work plan. In addition, IFES reprogrammed \$17,000 which was used to buy fax machines for the rapid transmission of results. These were donated to the Tribunal.

H) *National Training Plan:* In mid-March, the *Juntas Cívicas* training manual was completed and three thousand copies were printed. Members of Juntas Cívicas were trained in 29 seminars held throughout the country.

## EL SALVADOR

### ***I. Diagnostic Study of Salvadoran Society and Citizen Participation with a Focus on Gender***

IFES completed the English translation of the Executive Summary of the IFES-organized Diagnostic Study of Citizen Participation in El Salvador and distributed it to interested US Government officials. This baseline study examines the level of knowledge and understanding of basic democratic principles and perceived obstacles to participation among Salvadoran citizens, with a special emphasis on gender. The study was conducted last fall through a series of 24 focus groups of varying social and educational sectors nationwide.

### ***II. RNP (National Registry of Natural Persons)***

IFES and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) jointly developed a collaborative work plan for technical assistance to the newly-established National Registry of Natural Persons. Official approval of the work plan by the Government of El Salvador was announced in February. IFES' participation in the joint UNDP-IFES project is to provide technical assistance to the new Salvadoran government agency through international technical consultants. The UNDP will provide technical assistance support through national technical consultants and sponsorship of participation in international seminars and conferences on cutting edge technology as related to civil registries, single identity documents, AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Index Systems), and related issues. UN Senior Democracy Advisor Horacio Boneo is the Team Leader of the UNDP-IFES assistance project and Dr. Gonzalo Brenes is IFES' Senior Consultant; together they were responsible for the development of the RNP work plan.

Following are the highlights of the IFES contribution to the RNP project:

- Civil Registry Expert
- Single Identity Card/MIS Expert
- DataBase Expert
- AFIS Expert
- Strategic Planner
- Logistician/Equipment Analyst
- IFES will provide the funds for transportation costs associated with a Civil Registry field survey.

The RNP, UNDP, and USAID/IFES agreed that the start date of the project would be April 15, 1998. It is expected to take three months. Gonzalo Brenes has started to prepare detailed plans for all Civil Registry activities and is working as well with RNP staff on the first activity, municipal review of civil registry conditions/contents. This activity contemplates the deployment of RNP staffers and Gonzalo Brenes to over 100 municipalities over a two week period. Before proceeding with the detailed planning, Dr. Brenes conducted a seminar with the core staff on comparative civil registry systems and processes. Approaches to and information on Vital Statistics, Legal Issues, and their inter-relations were comprehensively addressed. The group then worked with Dr. Brenes on the design of the review forms and deployment plan. The forms were presented to and approved by the RNP Registrar, Luís Zaldivar.

## PERU

### *Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Study on "Geographic Location of Electoral Absenteeism in Peru"*

IFES consultant Aurelio Castro provided technical assistance to the Peruvian National Registry, IDENTIDAD, in developing the absenteeism study. Additionally, IFES donated two licences for the Arc View software to IDENTIDAD and held a training seminar for the institution's management information systems personnel and regional managers in Lima.

The goals of the study were to determine (1) the geographic distribution of both unregistered voters and those who are registered but do not vote, and (2) the obstacles and challenges to civic and electoral participation of certain sectors of the population. Through a cross study of different databases containing information on the Peruvian population, GIS software is being used to determine the geographic location and social characteristics of these non-voters. On April 20, 1998, IFES formally presented the preliminary results of the study to USAID, NGOs and Government of Peru Institutions.

#### *Validation of IFES Electoral Training Materials*

IFES and the *Centro de Teleeducación de la Universidad Católica del Perú* (CETUC) began a study to evaluate the training materials produced in collaboration with the National Electoral Tribunal (JNE) for the 1995 General Elections and with the National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE) for the 1995 Municipal Elections, 1996 Partial Municipal Elections, and 1997 Recall of Mayors. The evaluation will be concluded in mid-May 1998.

#### *Transparencia - Multimedia Electoral Resource Center*

IFES continues to support the Peruvian NGO Transparencia's Multimedia Electoral Center. The assistance is directed at:

- activities leading to the self-sustainability of the Center's activities; and
- the further provision of free information services on civic and electoral topics, as well as other related initiatives which can continue in the aftermath of IFES' assistance.

#### *Foro Nacional/Internacional*

The NGO *Foro Nacional/Internacional* developed a program for a symposium on civil society, political participation and electoral processes. They confirmed

the participation of speakers and panelists, and made logistical arrangements for the activity. Foro also designed the promotional materials (posters and pamphlets) for the event which will be held on April 24, 1998. Two main speakers (one local and one international) will present on the participation of civil society in politics and in electoral processes.

In addition to the Symposium, on April 25, there will be an open discussion on the participation of university youths. Plenary sessions followed by working groups have been organized. Their objective will be to promote an open discussion on politics, civil society, citizen participation, and the role of youths in the transformation of democratic processes and the national development of Peru.

In addition, the Foro, with IFES assistance, has established a national network of information for university students. The structure, contents and format for the website "University Youth" have been developed with the assistance of the Multimedia Electoral Center of Transparencia. This website will serve as a virtual forum to which university students and others interested can find and discuss information on academic, cultural and other problems facing students.

The website will also contain copies of publications and working documents on different topics of interest. These publications must be approved by IFES and USAID prior to their being included in the website. It is expected that 20 - 25 texts will have been approved and placed on the website at the conclusion of IFES' assistance.

#### **HAITI**

IFES' Haiti field office has continued its analysis of the voter registration process with the goal of producing recommendations for improving the system that take into account the experience of electoral officials at all levels. Claude Henry Oreste, IFES/Haiti Deputy Director, has been traveling throughout the

departments of Haiti with voter registries consultant Serge Noel. They are also meeting with political party representatives to include their perspectives and suggestions in the final recommendations.

In March, IFES President Richard Soudriette and Senior Program Officer Karen Seiger visited Haiti. They met with IFES staff, representatives from USAID, the US Embassy, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN/OAS Civilian Mission (MICIVIH), the Provisional Electoral Council, and the Presidential Commission to discuss the political crisis in Haiti and its effects on the electoral process. The visitors also sought support for activities to promote dialog on a permanent Electoral Council, including a seminar on permanent electoral councils as agencies of governance.

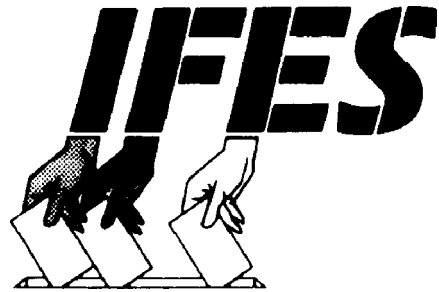
In April, IFES invited CEP President Toussaint and Vice President Julian to attend the Founding General Assembly of the Association of Caribbean Electoral Organizations (ACEO). Haiti became one of the Charter Members of the ACEO, along with fourteen other Caribbean nations. IFES is planning to coordinate with ACEO members in promoting a dialog in Haiti on establishing a permanent electoral council.

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**Washington, D.C.:**  
[www.ifes.org](http://www.ifes.org)

**Paraguay:** [www.quanta.net/ifes/](http://www.quanta.net/ifes/)

*IFES is a private, nonprofit organization that provides election-related technical assistance, observation activities, civic and voter programs, and support for civil society development in emerging and established democracies. IFES has worked in more than 90 countries around the world and is currently celebrating its tenth anniversary.*



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