



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

DELIVERING ON **DEMOCRACY'S PROMISE**

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



I BOARD MESSAGE

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS OF IFES,

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic threatened lives, livelihoods and democracy as elections were postponed and autocrats sought to consolidate power. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) responded with critical life-saving support for freedom-seeking people with [IFES' COVID-19 Briefing Series](#) on how to safely hold elections and withstand democratic backsliding during the pandemic and in its wake. IFES prioritized keeping voters, staff and partners safe. IFES brought much of its work online and helped partners continue theirs, navigating difficult supply chain disruptions for cybersecurity operations and adapting to accessible, virtual trainings and events. We convened more people than ever before from more than 120 countries for a fascinating virtual version of the U.S. Election Program (USEP). Through it all, IFES brought its renowned innovation, adaptation and technical expertise to bear in every region of the world, from Ethiopia to Ukraine.

IFES staff and partners proved to be remarkably resilient and responsive, as did the new mission, vision and Strategic Plan adopted by the Board in 2019 before the pandemic. As a Board of Directors of international and U.S.-based bipartisan members, we too stood fast on our commitment to IFES' mission and values. We added our voice to those of all races, ethnicities and faiths calling for an end to racism.

As parts of the world begin to emerge from the dark shadow of the pandemic and reopen, others are still in its throes. IFES stands ready to continue to support with passion and commitment the aspiration of nations, societies and people around the world to freely choose their leaders through elections and to enjoy the benefits of accountable democratic governance.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Devine

Thomas A. Devine,
Chair, IFES Board of Directors



J. Kenneth Blackwell

Amb. J. Kenneth Blackwell,
Co-Chair, IFES Board of Directors



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND CEO

This *Annual Report* covers a remarkable year. In early 2020, IFES leadership was slated to participate in a long-scheduled crisis simulation. However, that meeting was canceled as the pandemic unfurled and IFES was plunged into a real-life exercise in crisis management.

I am proud that IFES was more than equal to the challenge. Our Strategic Plan withstood the ultimate stress test and successfully guided us in our mission, **together we build democracies that deliver for all.**

Meanwhile, all around the world, the pandemic cast in sharp relief the critical necessity of good, transparent governance, and how existentially important it is that democracies deliver on their promises. The lure of “strong leadership” promised by authoritarians and populists will have little attraction if democracies are electorally responsive and capable of meeting the needs of their people and communities.

The coming years will be so important as this very real struggle between democracy and authoritarianism continues across the globe. Hundreds of millions of lives will be impacted.

To meet this challenge, IFES is committed to developing – in collaboration with our hundreds of partners in countries around the world – the new tools so desperately needed to support democracies, resist democratic backsliding, shore up fragile institutions, and counter corruption and rising authoritarianism.

With your partnership, intelligence, and commitment, IFES will remain at the forefront of innovative work to provide citizens with the fundamental human right to have a say in how they are governed and by whom.

After the experiences of 2020, I know that we will, together, rise to the challenges ahead of us with energy and creativity. On behalf of everyone at IFES, we thank you for sharing our vision of **democracy for a better future.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Anthony N. Banbury'.

Anthony N. Banbury,
IFES President and CEO

IFES BY THE NUMBERS 2020



Programming in over
50 countries



Safe administration
of elections in
23 countries



90,412,467
individuals received
voter education through
IFES-assisted programs



368,526
individuals received civic
education through IFES-
assisted programs



79 elections supported



83 election management
bodies supported by IFES



51
guides and reports published, 76
percent with a COVID-19 focus



40
laws or amendments
adopted to strengthen
democracy and elections*



47
election FAQs and Infographics



230
civil society organizations
(CSOs) engaged in advocacy*



103
web stories published



119
postponed election events tracked
in 69 countries and 8 territories
during the pandemic



902,900
impressions on Twitter



23
IFES global virtual events



4,728
media hits

*Funded by the U.S.
government.



ABOUT IFES

IFES advances democracy for a better future. We collaborate with civil society, public institutions and the private sector to build resilient democracies that deliver for everyone. As a global leader in the promotion and protection of democracy, our technical assistance and applied research develops trusted electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections; effective and accountable governing institutions; civic and political processes in which all people can safely and equally participate; and innovative ways in which technology and data can positively serve elections and democracy. Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries, from developing to mature democracies. IFES is a global, nonpartisan nonprofit organization based in Arlington, Virginia, and registered as a 501(c)(3).

A man with light hair, wearing a dark blue sweater over a light blue collared shirt, is speaking. The background is a blurred cityscape with tall buildings under a hazy sky.

VIRTUAL USEP 2020: A FRONT-ROW SEAT TO THE U.S. ELECTIONS

Since 1992, IFES has gathered global partners to observe and learn about the U.S. elections firsthand. As part of IFES' ongoing commitment to flexibility, innovation and resilience in the wake of COVID-19, the United States Election Program (USEP) became a virtual experience for the first time. IFES' reimagined Virtual USEP 2020 gave diverse participants from around the world a unique window into the U.S. elections – online.

The Virtual USEP – spanning 24 time zones and two weeks – featured more than 60 independent experts and bipartisan speakers on topics such as youth participation, voting by mail and pre- and post-election analysis.

**“ I just have to say,
we are so grateful to IFES.
So grateful for the work
being done to provide an
opportunity to connect
us with this important
global community.”**

— Brad Smith,
*Microsoft president,
in a video appearance at
the Virtual USEP 2020*

COVID-19 and the U.S. Elections

Leveraging the real-time example of the 2020 U.S. elections, USEP featured a conversation on how COVID-19 challenges election officials and changes the voter experience. Experts explored the wide-ranging pandemic responses across the U.S. and their impact on the 2020 elections and beyond, including on trust and confidence in electoral processes, the use of data for election planning and voter education in times of uncertainty. The panel featured remarks from IFES President and CEO Anthony N. Banbury, Commissioner Thomas Hicks of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, Voting Rights Counsel James Tucker of the Native American Rights Fund, Professor Rayid Ghani of Carnegie Mellon University, Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and IFES Senior Global Legal Advisor Katherine Ellena.

“For people who have fought and died for [my right to vote], the least I can do is fill out a ballot from home.”

— Commissioner Thomas Hicks,
U.S. Election Assistance Commission



Technology and Democracy

Featuring experts from Microsoft, the public sector and civil society, this livestreamed event discussed the election-security state of play immediately following the 2020 elections, post-election vulnerabilities, disinformation as a security concern and how the international community can work together on election security. IFES' Virtual USEP 2020 collaboration with Microsoft also directly resulted in new connections between election officials overseas and Microsoft's Defending Democracy Program.

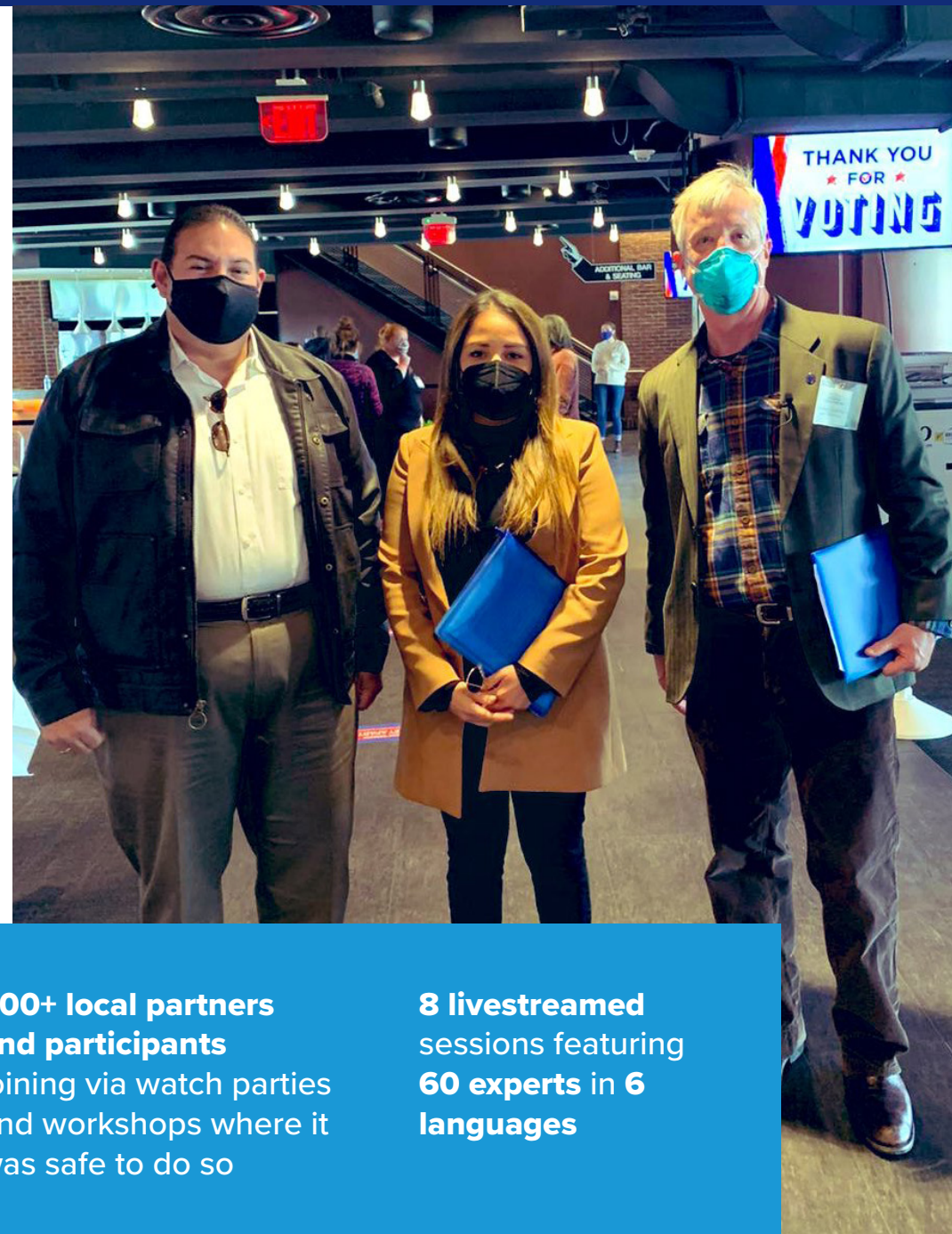
“The future of election security is collaborative.”

- Meredith Berger,
Senior Manager, Defending Democracy Program, Microsoft



Virtual and In-Person Polling Place Visits

IFES produced a virtual tour of polling places across the United States for USEP participants, which included drive-through voting and socially distanced poll worker training at a drive-in movie theater. IFES leadership also hosted a small group of diplomatic representatives for a series of in-person visits to voting places on Election Day, including the ambassador of Ukraine; the ambassador and health minister of Ecuador; the ambassador of Honduras; and representatives from the embassies of Australia, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. IFES worked with six regional electoral bodies to gain permission to safely visit over a dozen stations in the Washington, D.C., area.



**VIRTUAL
USEP 2020
BY THE
NUMBERS**

2,174 RSVPs from
126 countries

4 IFES original
whiteboard videos

**400+ local partners
and participants**
joining via watch parties
and workshops where it
was safe to do so

8 livestreamed
sessions featuring
60 experts in **6**
languages

IFES' STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

IFES advances four strategic outcomes (SOs) to promote and defend democracy, developed through a participatory strategic planning process: SO1 Election Integrity; SO2 Anti-Corruption and Democratic Trust; SO3 Inclusion and Human Rights; and SO4 Civic Tech. These priorities focus our efforts and align with the challenges we face worldwide.





STRATEGIC OUTCOME 1

Trusted electoral institutions deliver credible elections.

IFES builds the capacity of electoral institutions and officials to address emerging challenges and win public trust. Our work is underpinned by cutting-edge research and analysis.

iEXCEL: Leadership Through Electoral Crisis

Electoral leaders often operate at the center of fundamental power transitions, under enormous political pressure while facing uniquely complex challenges to their independence. IFES' **Executive Curriculum in Electoral Leadership** (iEXCEL) draws on real-world peer experiences to help prepare leaders of election management bodies to meet these challenges by developing skills to strengthen institutional independence, deliver elections within the context of a crisis, resist the manipulation of elections by political actors and foster institutional resilience and capacity.

“**The iEXCEL curriculum was without a doubt relevant and timely ... The simulation was really valuable and provided a glimpse of election-day reality.**”

— Senior election official, *Asia-Pacific*



In July 2020, IFES technical experts led a training with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of The Gambia to deliver part one of iEXCEL. As a result of this partnership, the IEC cultivated its leadership and crisis communication skills ahead of the 2021 referendum and general elections. Working with the IEC built on lessons from a four-day training for Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission held in June 2020, during which iEXCEL was first adapted to an online format. The training in The Gambia adopted a hybrid approach to instruction, mixing in-person and online facilitated sessions.

“**I am now able to distinguish the difference between electoral leadership and management, power and influence and am equipped with a better understanding of how to resolve a crisis.**”

— iEXCEL training participant

SPOTLIGHT

FOLLOWING THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ELECTIONS

Elections around the world were impacted by COVID-19. IFES tracked the latest information on election postponements, adjusted election dates and risk-mitigating strategies adopted during elections.

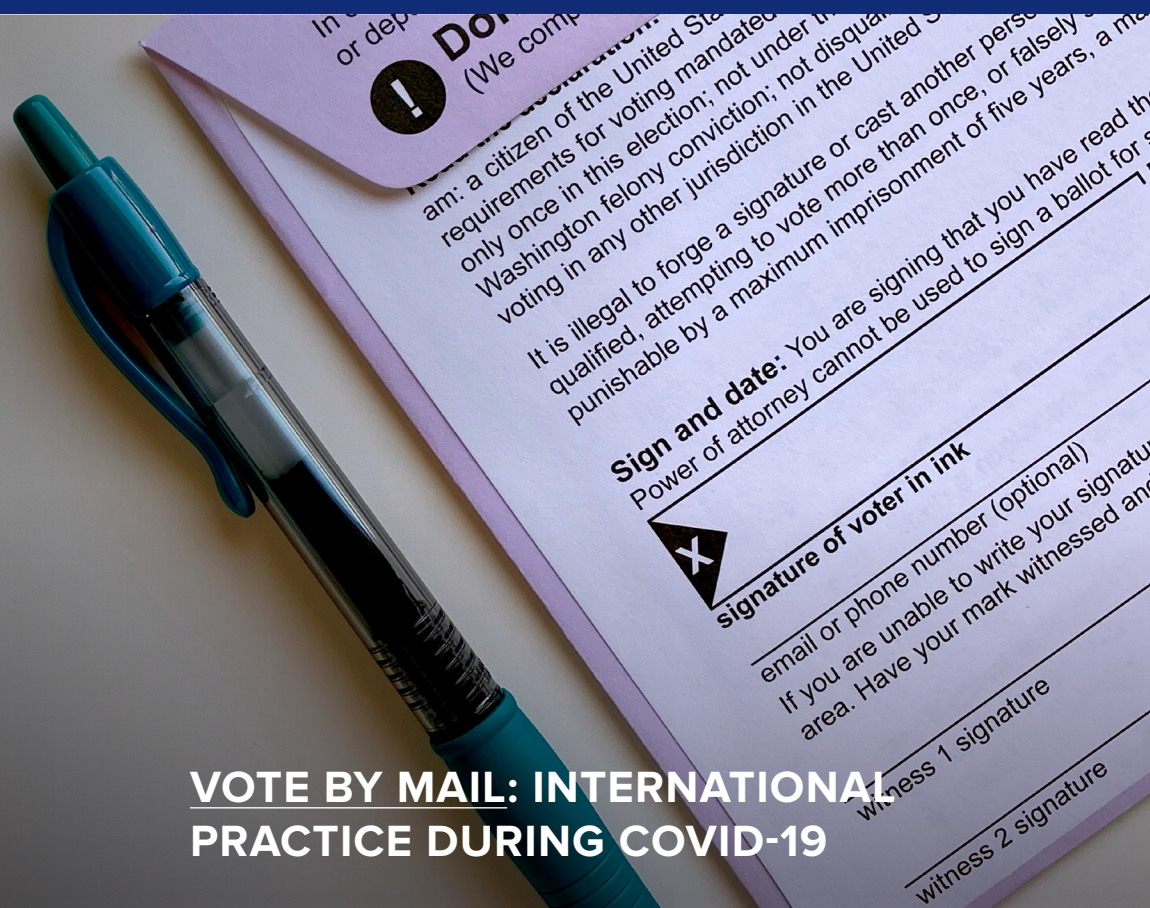
MYANMAR YOUTH INNOVATE TO ENGAGE FIRST-TIME VOTERS

An estimated 5 million young people were eligible to vote for the first time in Myanmar's 2020 elections. Ahead of the elections, IFES brought together young leaders from across the country to collaborate on new approaches to engage, motivate and educate these first-time voters. IFES also organized a Tune Up to Vote singing competition to encourage youth participation, which attracted 13 million views on Facebook.

Youth were among the 72 percent of voters who turned out for the elections. Remarkably, despite being held during a pandemic, turnout was 2 percentage points higher than in 2015.

VOTE BY MAIL: INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinvigorated debate around alternative voting methods. A growing number of democracies have successfully operated distance voting and the most effective administrations have scaled up operations over several electoral cycles, incrementally calibrating and improving capacity and safeguards. With increased demand for this complex service in the wake of the pandemic, election authorities, voters and politicians need to be cognizant of the risks and rewards associated with rapidly scaling up distance voting. In ***Vote By Mail: International Practice During COVID-19***, IFES compared practices across Europe, Asia, Oceania and various U.S. states, providing best practice recommendations for legislators and election administrators.



Safeguarding Health and Elections

Safeguarding Health and Elections, the first of six papers in IFES' COVID-19 Briefing Series, details how elections can be held safely during the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health crises. This guide offers the experience of electoral and public health experts to reduce risks to voters and election officials. It addresses a host of challenges, beginning with the critical decision on whether to hold in-person elections. It also aims to reduce threats to democracy posed by cancelations and postponements that are avoidable with proper planning.

Since its publication in May 2020, this lifesaving guide has been translated into 14 languages to support the more than 100 elections held worldwide since the beginning of the pandemic. Safeguarding Health and Elections' recommendations were updated in March 2021, drawing on the lessons learned from these elections.

Holding elections amid public health crises is possible, but considerable planning is needed to avoid exacerbating an already dire situation.



WEBINAR SERIES: DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE IN EUROPE DURING A PANDEMIC

With most in-person events and activities canceled or postponed due to restrictions on travel and large gatherings of people, IFES swiftly embraced this challenge and opportunity. For example, IFES' "Regional Elections Administration and Political Processes Strengthening" program adapted in-person events to online webinars to ensure continued engagement of key electoral stakeholders across the Europe and Eurasia region. The series, offered in many languages, featured notable experts discussing key issues related to electoral integrity during a pandemic. It received broad interest and high-level participation from election administrators, advocates and observers in more than 35 countries.



VOTING DURING COVID-19

WHAT SCARES PEOPLE THE MOST?

COVID-19 considerably decreased voter turnout in many countries that moved forward with in-person elections. Understanding voters' fears about going to the polls is crucial to addressing their concerns and creating a safe voting environment. Having conducted nationwide surveys in the Dominican Republic, Nigeria and Serbia, IFES shared preliminary insights into voters' main concerns.

IFES joined more than 500 political and civil leaders, Nobel Laureates and pro-democracy institutions on an open letter to defend democracy, warning that the freedoms we cherish are under threat from governments that are using the crisis to tighten their grip on power.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic posed serious threats to democracy. Many governments around the world used emergency powers to restrict human rights and enhance state surveillance, often disregarding legal constraints, checks and balances and time frames for restoring constitutional order.

"A Call to Defend Democracy" raised awareness and mobilized citizens and policymakers to protect democracy – recognizing that this is the most effective system for handling global crises while protecting the rights of all citizens, particularly minorities and marginalized groups. IFES also contributed to and endorsed a joint report *Democracy & COVID-19: Upgrading International Support*, which was produced alongside the open letter.

In addition, IFES President and CEO Anthony N. Banbury and 27 other global leaders signed an open letter led by the Kofi Annan Foundation calling on governments and civil society to act to safeguard hard-won democratic rights and the integrity of elections. **"Democracy must not become the silent victim of the coronavirus pandemic."**

Uniting to #DefendDemocracy

“Democracy is under threat, and people who care about it must summon the will, the discipline, and the solidarity to defend it. At stake are the freedom, health and dignity of people everywhere.”



STRATEGIC OUTCOME 2

Effective governing institutions are accountable to the people they serve.

Corruption empowers authoritarians and erodes citizen trust in democratic governance with political, security and economic consequences. IFES forges rich partnerships to tackle corruption and strengthen a culture of accountability between and among civil society, government and the media – often in difficult environments. We support anti-corruption frameworks; regulation and oversight of political and campaign finance; the mitigation of the abuse of state resources; autonomy and accountability of independent institutions; and the investigation and prosecution of election-related corrupt practices.

Since 2017, IFES' anti-corruption portfolio has nearly tripled. We link technical experts with strong local organizations seeking to support government accountability with the review mechanism under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and equivalent regional conventions.

Programming is highly contextualized by country. Local partners design their interventions with IFES, based on extensive research and consultations to uncover the reasons for failed progress to date and the opportunities that might exist for tangible improvements. In Bulgaria, IFES' key partner developed recommendations on abuse of state resources, which were incorporated in the state's new National Anti-Corruption Strategy. In Montenegro, our local partner is working in coordination with the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption to strengthen its practices on political finance reporting. In Romania, IFES' partners are collaborating directly with state institutions to strengthen asset recovery and management processes.

“Pervasive corruption erodes the credibility and legitimacy of democratic institutions, entrenches fractures in society and undermines governments' ability to serve their citizens.”

— *IFES President and CEO
Anthony N. Banbury*

United Against Corruption

Government responses to COVID-19 in many countries have had the effect of undermining transparency and accountability mechanisms, increasing the risks of corrupt behavior. As part of IFES' contribution to preparations for United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Anti-Corruption 2021 and the development of a draft political declaration, IFES made six recommendations. Throughout December 2020, IFES marked International Anti-Corruption Day by highlighting these:

- Increasing transparency and accountability in political finance
- Addressing election-related corrupt practices
- Strengthening anti-corruption authorities and other independent institutions
- Strengthening judicial ethics and independence
- Leveraging civil society to bolster oversight and implementation
- Bolstering the United Nations Convention Against Corruption review process



STRATEGIC PARTNER MAPPING, CAPACITY ASSESSMENT AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS IN PRACTICE: ALBANIA

For 25 years, IFES, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute have partnered in the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development to advance democracy in more than 140 countries. In August 2020, IFES and CEPPS partners helped to establish the U.S.-Albania Transparency Academy (USATA) to accelerate transparency and accountability in various sectors to reduce corruption and expand civic engagement. We gathered a team of top experts and local stakeholders from across sectors while also collecting ideas from diverse international academics, implementers and innovators. This approach produced a solid roadmap and organizational structure that has the potential to serve as a scalable model for the region and beyond.

Linking Facebook and Civil Society to Counter Corruption

IFES and CeMI reported a network of 39 pages and eight groups to Facebook's threat intelligence team for suspected engagement in coordinated inauthentic behavior ahead of Montenegro's August 30 elections.

In 2020, IFES leveraged Facebook funding for a pilot project to develop methods for civil society partners to detect campaign violations and abuse of state resources on social media; increase transparency of spending on online political advertising; and identify suspected networks of coordinated inauthentic behavior on Facebook. IFES worked with Montenegrin civil society partner the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) to build technical capacity and develop a methodology for using CrowdTangle, a Facebook-owned content management platform. Using CrowdTangle, CeMI was able to investigate, monitor and report to Facebook a network of accounts with suspected links to Serbia circulating far-right hate speech and propaganda. IFES' work with CeMI and other leading academics and CSOs also resulted in an approach to detect signals of state resource abuse on social media, which CeMI used to complement their broader anti-corruption work.

To strengthen local actors' oversight and outreach, IFES also partnered with Facebook to train dozens of civil society actors in Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro and Romania on Facebook's newly expanded political ad library. To build on these introductory trainings, which continued into 2021, IFES is forming a community of practice among civil society partners in the field of online political advertising transparency. Moving forward, IFES will partner with Facebook on subgrants to civil society partners to document their investigative and monitoring approaches and lead working sessions with peer organizations in other countries.



LEARNING

As a learning organization, IFES has an internal Knowledge Management Initiative Working Group for each of our strategic outcomes and other focus areas to help grow the innovative research, tools and technical expertise we offer our partners worldwide.



STRATEGIC OUTCOME 3

All people safely participate
in civic and political life on
an equal basis.

IFES promotes political participation, justice and equal rights for all people, including women; persons with disabilities; youth; racial, ethnic and religious minorities; internally displaced persons; and Indigenous communities.

Centering IFES' COVID-19 Response on Inclusion and Equity

The impact of the pandemic – both the virus and responses to it – is heightened for people already facing barriers to rights and resources. This is why IFES' inclusion programs have served as a focal point for our pandemic response.

“Enough victims, enough marginalization, let us strive together for a country that accommodates all its children. Long live the human rights movement.”

— *Advocates marching for human rights in Lebanon*



SPOTLIGHT

MARCHING TOGETHER IN LEBANON TOWARD RECOVERING STOLEN RIGHTS

In the midst of the pandemic, an economic crisis and an explosion in Beirut, Lebanese civil society has mobilized to provide emergency assistance to those in need. In honor of Human Rights Day, the Committee for the Families of the Kidnapped and IFES' partner the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities co-organized a march to unite people from different backgrounds to demand their human rights. With support from IFES, the coalition protects and advocates for the rights of women, people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, youth, refugees and other marginalized people.

A Rights-Based Approach to Youth Participation

IFES' Strengthening Engagement Through Education for Democracy (SEED) approach, a university-level civic education methodology – was adapted for online delivery during the pandemic in Ukraine. To provide a space for young Bangladeshi leaders and technical experts to collaborate and enhance young people's capacity to counter COVID-19 challenges, IFES and Dhaka University's Microgovernance Research Initiative organized 11 webinars for the Students Against Violence Everywhere network. More than 200 students and faculty from 21 universities participated in the virtual events on topics such as online education, social media and the rights of persons with disabilities and women.

In August 2020, IFES marked International Youth Day by showcasing young leaders around the world in a monthlong social media campaign. Additionally, @IFES1987 hosted a Facebook Live event on "Young Leaders Building Sustainable Democracies," in which young leaders from Nepal, Nigeria and Ukraine illuminated the many ways that young people contribute to building and sustaining global democracy.



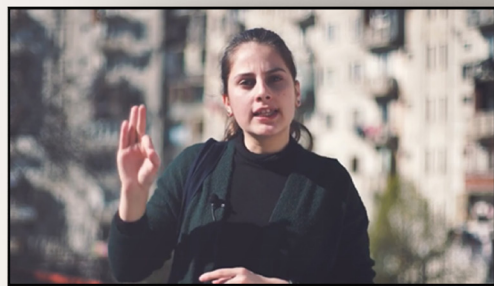
“Organized communities can overcome the condition of being voiceless and transform their reality by themselves. Community organizing is a process by the people, of the people, for the people.”

— Youth community mobilizer in Georgia who participated in IFES' “Knowledge, Advocacy, Responsibility, engagement” program

“Nothing About Us Without Us:” Disability Rights Advocacy

One out of every seven people in the world has a disability, yet people with disabilities remain underrepresented in political and public life. In 2020, disabled people’s organization (DPO) partners from the IFES-founded General Election Network for Disability Access (AGENDA) in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) advocated for principles of the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities policy to be integrated into pandemic response across the region. AGENDA leveraged its relationship with the ASEAN Secretariat for a series of webinars on the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities in Southeast Asia, raising awareness not only with the disability community but specifically with the national and regional government stakeholders responsible for implementing the policy.

At the national level, AGENDA partners successfully advocated with government officials in Malaysia using the policy platform methodology they learned from IFES to ensure that COVID-19 information was available in accessible formats such as sign language. Partners collected critical data in the Philippines on the impacts of the pandemic on persons with disabilities. In Thailand, partners created short explainer videos on the impact of the Enabling Masterplan in political, social and economic life. In Indonesia, partners held an awareness-raising event with performers with disabilities in collaboration with the ASEAN Disability Forum and the Indonesian Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Recognizing that most advocacy is now happening online, partners are also using skills developed in trainings on cyber hygiene and using social media for advocacy.




CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The theme for International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2020 was “Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World.” In 2020, IFES partnered with DPOs in every region of the world to develop innovative approaches to empower people with disabilities to participate in political life during the pandemic and beyond.

Increasing Women's Participation in Politics

IFES advances gender equality through both mainstreaming and implementing targeted initiatives. In 2020, IFES' gender equality work focused on:

- **SUPPORTING WOMEN TO EXERCISE THEIR POLITICAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DURING COVID-19.** IFES' COVID-19 Briefing Series: Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation assists people worldwide to address the challenges to women's political participation that were created and exacerbated by the pandemic. The Nepal Disabled Women Association, one of IFES' local partners, advocated to ensure that the rights of women with disabilities are included in Nepal's COVID-19 response. IFES' Gender Impact of COVID-19 in Pakistan: Contextual Analysis and the Way Forward provided key recommendations for the government and the Election Commission of Pakistan.
- **COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ONLINE.** Gender-based violence online is a major barrier to women's political participation. Building upon our work in this area, IFES has begun addressing other online threats including the gender dimensions of disinformation. False narratives erode progress on women's rights and democratic institutions by seeking to reduce competition and push women out of the political sphere.
- **WORKING WITH MALE ALLIES FOR A MORE GENDER-EQUAL WORLD.** IFES' targeted programming with men supports them in being better allies for women at home, at work and within their communities. Our male allies work engages male allies to reimagine the role men play in women's political participation by supporting and advocating for women's public engagement. In 2020, IFES adjusted its Allies for Equality curriculum for online delivery and held trainings in Libya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.



“ [The Allies for Equality program] gave me the confidence to stand by the women of my family and work alongside them to make our village a better place for women and encourage our community to strive for improved voters' turnout in the next elections.”

— An 18-year-old man from a village in Khyber district, Pakistan

Online Training Launched to Engage Pakistani Women with Disabilities in Public Policy Reform

IFES' "Power to Persuade" training builds the skills of women with disabilities to advocate with policymakers, elected officials and other political powerbrokers for reform. In response to COVID-19 and with support from Global Affairs Canada, IFES adapted its training methodology for online implementation for women in Pakistan in July 2020.

“ I will teach my children to vote, so that they have a better future.”

— *A Tunisian woman who was motivated to engage in politics after interacting with an IFES-supported civic education ambassador*



The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and fueled discrimination. On Human Rights Day on December 10, IFES shared contributions to the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on minority rights and freedom of religion or belief.

Anti-Racism

Vibrant and inclusive democracies denounce racism. IFES works to end racism and advance equal participation in civic and political life. Eliminating racial discrimination and repression advances human rights and improves access to education, employment, health and housing.

IFES strengthens the inclusion and political participation of people of all races and ethnicities through programs in the following areas:

- Civic and voter education campaigns
- Capacity building, leadership training and governmental outreach
- Increasing capacity of state and electoral institutions
- Combating disinformation and hate speech

IFES' Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) addresses the effects of systemic racism by promoting employee equity, representation and inclusion within the organization, championing anti-racism across all IFES service lines and promoting community-based actions on racial justice outside IFES.





STRATEGIC OUTCOME 4

Technology, information and data positively serve elections and democracy.

Increasingly, technology and social media are abused by malign actors to undermine democracy and electoral systems. IFES is crafting creative, proactive solutions, with a new election technology and cyber-hygiene course; innovative research on social media, disinformation and electoral integrity; and partnerships with technology companies via the Technology for Democracy (T4D) Fund.

Democratic Stakeholders in Tunisia Adapt Amid COVID-19

When the pandemic threatened Tunisia's democratic transition, IFES worked with the High Independent Authority for Elections, Court of Accounts (CoA) and Deaf communities to adapt in real time.

As COVID-19 raised important questions about how a previously created IFES e-learning platform could be shifted to a primary training source for election officials, IFES worked to make the platform available on smartphones. When government-imposed restrictions temporarily halted CoA judges and clerks' finance monitoring work due to a lack of remote access, IFES identified a solution that enabled, through a virtual private network, secure access so that judges and clerks could resume their critical oversight functions.

IFES has also furthered – through technology and high-quality information – the meaningful inclusion of Deaf communities in political life during the pandemic. In spring 2020, IFES developed videos in Tunisian Sign Language to raise awareness about the pandemic with Deaf communities and to encourage people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing to follow health guidelines. Both videos featured Deaf Tunisians as actors who are members of IFES' "My Sign, My Voice" working group.

These activities build upon Tunisia's Electoral Sign Language Lexicon and "My Sign, My Voice" mobile application (available on Android and iOS) and website, which IFES developed in partnership with DPOs ahead of the 2019 Tunisian elections.



“ When the coronavirus started to spread ... Deaf people didn't have much information about how dangerous the virus is. ... I participated in this video to raise awareness of Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons about this virus before it heavily hit Tunisia.”

— *Young Deaf Tunisian woman featured in IFES' sign language video*

Rapid Analysis and Action: Cybersecurity in Ecuadorian Elections

To identify vulnerabilities in Ecuador's National Electoral Council's information technology framework, IFES deployed rapidly to conduct a cybersecurity analysis, providing a critical roadmap for activities leading up to the 2021 elections.

IFES' Holistic Exposure and Adaptation Testing (HEAT) process aims to secure automated or digitalized electoral processes against unanticipated threats, illicit incursions, system failures or unfounded legal challenges by assessing different types of technology systems (technology, human, political, legal and procedural exposure).



Thought Leadership: Elevating Practical, Global Expertise on Tech in Elections

COVID-19 increased interest in and demand for online services – including voting. Early in the pandemic, IFES responded quickly with the resource [Considerations on Internet Voting: An Overview for Electoral Decision-Makers](#). Eventually, internet or online voting may expand voter participation and protect voting rights – but first more research and wide-scale testing of technologies and safeguards are needed to make it secure. Internet voting is susceptible to cyberattacks, fraud and misuse. Technological and human vulnerabilities must be addressed to ensure security and voter confidence as internet and online voting expands. Once it is truly secure, internet voting may have benefits for some voters, including more accessibility for some persons with disabilities and expanded access for expatriates, diplomats and military service personnel. However, online voting cannot ever be a substitute for ensuring in-person voting works for everyone.





SPOTLIGHT ON UKRAINE

A FLAGSHIP IFES PROGRAM

In 2020, IFES Ukraine supported:

- **VOTER EDUCATION REACHING MILLIONS OF UKRAINIANS.** In partnership with Ukraine's Central Election Commission (CEC), the Ministry of Justice, media, civil society and educational institutions, IFES executed a nationwide voter information, education and mobilization campaign with 73 million views and engagements ahead of the 2020 local elections.
- **CYBERSECURITY RESILIENCE.** IFES has worked directly with the CEC, the State Security Service of Ukraine and the State Service for Special Communication and Information to prevent and mitigate cyberattacks on elections.
- **VOTING ACCESS FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS.** More than 100,000 people were enfranchised in the 2020 local elections after the CEC adopted procedures that – incorporating IFES, civil society and DPO comments – regulate change of election address for internally displaced people, internal economic migrants and citizens without registration. IFES and our CSO partners also successfully advocated for disability-inclusive legal reform, including that all polling stations must be accessible by 2025.
- **LEADERSHIP TRAINING WITH RESULTS.** IFES' Intersectionality Assessment of Political and Electoral Participation in Ukraine led to more access to political leadership training for young women with disabilities—and elected representation. Read Leonida's story (p. 32).
- **PREPARATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP FOR STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL AGE.** IFES' innovative civic education course is now being implemented by 70 university-level educators at 39 universities throughout Ukraine. Course evaluations have demonstrated that students gained knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to effectively monitor and hold the government and members of society accountable to principles of democracy in the digital age.
- **POLICE TRAINING TO FACILITATE PEACEFUL ELECTIONS AND RESPOND TO VIOLATIONS.** Ahead of 2020 local elections, citizen watchdog Civil Network OPORA, through a subaward from IFES, developed an interactive online course for law enforcement in Ukraine on ensuring the security of the electoral process and COVID-19 protocols. Over 60,000 law enforcement personnel successfully completed the course ahead of the elections.
- **CUTTING RED TAPE.** By reducing paperwork, the National Agency on Corruption Prevention's (NACP) new Electronic Party Finance Declaration System will enable NACP to focus on analyzing data and detecting violations.



SPOTLIGHT

IFES ALUMNA WINS SEAT IN UKRAINE'S LOCAL ELECTIONS

Leonida Ponomaryova, 28, is a scholar and civic activist with a visual disability. She is also an alumna of the unique Liderka (“woman leader”) School for Political Leadership for Young Women with Disabilities and a newly elected member of the Kyiv Oblast Council.

In 2019, the DPO Fight for Right, in partnership with IFES and through the support of Global Affairs Canada, organized Liderka for 21 young women with disabilities from across Ukraine.

Liderka participants learned about human rights, discrimination, political participation and leadership, feminism and the role of women with disabilities in decision-making. After completing the program, Leonida and six other young women earned internships with government agencies and institutions. Leonida interned at the CEC, where she helped revise national legislation on electoral process accessibility for voters with visual disabilities.

While participating in Liderka, she learned from mentors and grew her confidence and motivation. One of those mentors was former member of Parliament Iryna Suslova. Iryna helped motivate Leonida to join a political party – For the Future – and run for office during the 2020 local elections, where she successfully won a seat on the Kyiv Oblast Council.

“I wanted to become part of Ukrainian politics so I can influence and improve lives of people with disabilities,” Leonida says. “My motivation is also about eliminating hurtful stereotypes and biases around people with disabilities, that everyone should pity them instead of supporting and treating us like equals.”

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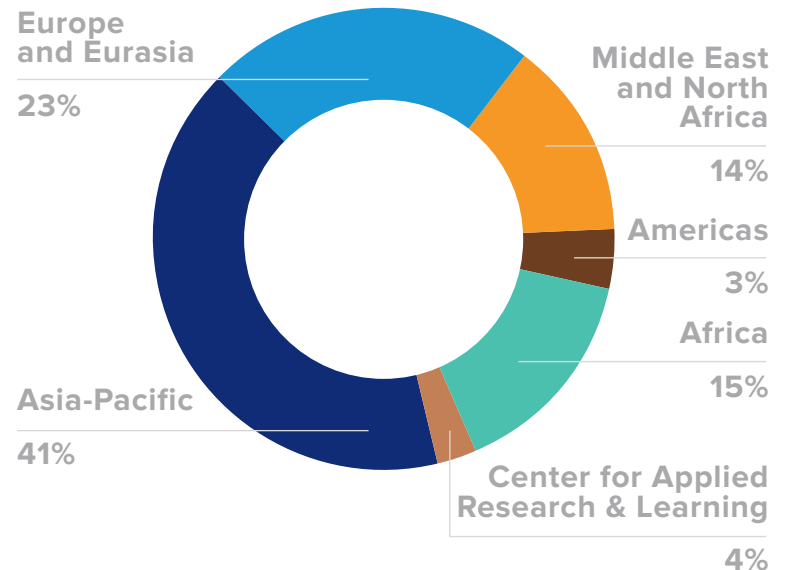
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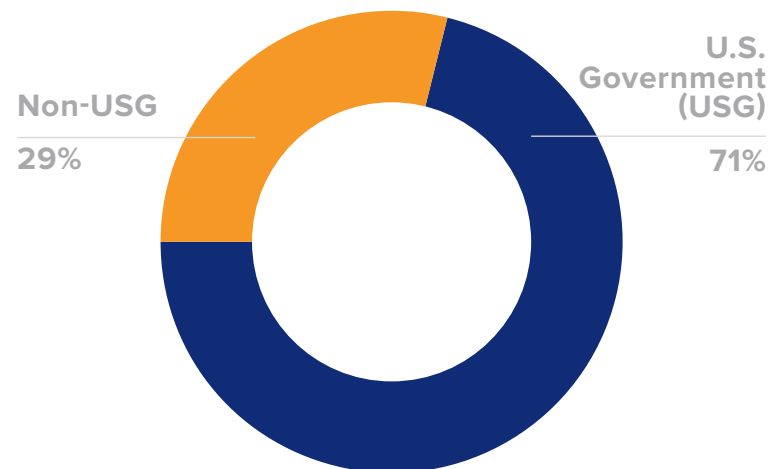
FISCAL YEAR 2020 FINANCIAL DATA

In fiscal year 2020, IFES received an unmodified opinion from independent auditors for our 2020 Financial Statement audit and Uniform Guidance audit. An unmodified opinion is the highest level of assurance that an organization's financial statements are free of material misstatements. These results reflect continuous efforts by IFES staff in ensuring that our financial management and compliance systems meet the rigors of all donor rules and regulations.

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