



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.

Supporting Democratic Governance in the Pacific Islands

The Pacific Islands are comprised of 12 independent nations – the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu – which face distinct challenges to their young democracies. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has been active in the region since 2001 and previously worked in PNG, Fiji and the Solomon Islands to support women's empowerment, electoral integrity and operations.

Under the "Supporting Democratic Governance in the Pacific Islands" program funded by the United States Agency for International Development, IFES supports election management bodies to strengthen electoral integrity and operations, promotes inclusion of women and persons with disabilities and engages media to increase voter awareness.

Program Highlights

Supporting Preparations for the Bougainville Referendum

In 2001, the civil war in Bougainville (1989-98) ended with a peace agreement that formalized Bougainville's status as an autonomous region within PNG and mandated a formal referendum on the region's future political status. In coordination with the "Bougainville Electoral Support Program" funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, IFES provides targeted support to the development of the electoral roll and operational plans ahead of the 2019 referendum; supports an inclusive referendum by facilitating Power to Persuade and Engaging a New Generation for Accessible Governance and Elections trainings to increase the advocacy capacity of disabled people's organizations (DPO) and promote engagement of youth with disabilities in the upcoming referendum, respectively; and trains media representatives on referendum procedures and responsible reporting practices.

Enhancing Women's Leadership and Involvement in Electoral Processes

The Pacific region contains three out of the four countries globally with no women representatives in politics, and women remain underrepresented in decision-making both inside and outside of government. However, there have been spurts of progress, including the election of the first female president in the Pacific in the Marshall Islands in 2016, the appointment of Fiji's first female speaker of Parliament in 2014 and the 2016 Bougainville Community Government Act which requires gender parity in ward representatives. To build on this progress, IFES provides targeted leadership and advocacy support to female electoral administrators, civil society leaders and DPO activists regionally through the She Leads and Power to Persuade curricula. Through these activities, IFES trains women to lead and effectively engage political leaders and supports the development of a regional network of female activists.

Promoting a Transparent and Fair Chuuk State Referendum

The Chuuk State, FSM independence referendum is currently scheduled for 2020 following a series of delays from the original March 2015 date. Leveraging experience supporting the Bougainville and Timor-Leste referendums, IFES will conduct an assessment to determine how to best support the FSM National Election Office to be referendum-ready.



For more on IFES in the Pacific Islands, visit www.IFES.org/Pacific-Islands.