

# A BOUNDLESS BLUEPRINT

by Patricia Hutar and Richard W. Soudriette



In 1987, F. Clifton White planted the seed that blossomed into the International Foundation for Election Systems, better known worldwide as IFES. In a fast-moving period of world history that saw the demise of totalitarian regimes, IFES quickly established a track record in helping new democracies to organize free, fair and transparent elections.

As our founder and first chairman, Cliff White inspired the organization with his strong belief that there is no single blueprint for democracy and that our efforts must be based on respect for each country's unique traditions and culture. Over the past 15 years we have put this underlying philosophy to the test in more than 120 countries and in the process have become a recognized leader in the promotion of democracy.

Five years ago IFES began to broaden its work beyond elections to embrace three new pillars: rule of law, civil society and governance. With courage, creativity and outstanding professionalism, IFES people have made a difference in every corner of the world in each of these areas.

- In *Elections*, IFES was the first international NGO to provide assistance in election administration. We have fostered professional associations of election officials around the world and have led the way in promoting full access to the democratic process for people with disabilities. IFES has also begun to provide technical assistance to improve the electoral process in the United States.
- In *Rule of Law*, IFES has prepared a groundbreaking *Guide to Judicial Independence* for USAID and has fostered the emergence of an independent judiciary in such places as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and Morocco. IFES is also promoting transparency and openness by

developing new tools for governments and NGOs to monitor political finance.

- In *Civil Society*, IFES is developing civic education curricula and engaging young people in the democratic process in places like Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. IFES has also played a central role in launching the Indonesian equivalent of C-Span, which regularly televises parliamentary proceedings for the first time in history.
- In *Governance*, we are doing innovative work to build the capacity of municipal government officials in such countries as Azerbaijan, where we are helping to launch nine municipal government resource centers throughout the country.

In 2000, at the urging of various European funding agencies, IFES established a subsidiary based in the United Kingdom, IFES Limited. IFES Limited has implemented a number of important projects in the Balkans and in Africa and played a central role in Sierra Leone's historic election on May 17 of this year.

The celebration of our 15th anniversary gives us the opportunity to re-dedicate ourselves to the vision of our founder, F. Clifton White, to create a world where all people have a say in how they are governed. Over the coming years we look forward to expanding and consolidating our work in the rule of law, civil society, governance and elections. Undoubtedly there will be new challenges as nations around the world continue to perfect and refine their practice of democracy. IFES stands ready to help them along this noble path.

Richard W. Soudriette  
President

Patricia Hutar  
Chair of the Board of Directors

Mikhail Gorbachev introduces *glasnost*, or openness, encouraging Soviet citizens to debate ways to bring about needed reform.



June: Thousands killed in Tiananmen Square as Chinese leaders take hard line toward demonstrators.



November: After 28 years, the Berlin Wall is opened to the West.



December: Romanian uprising overthrows Communist government; President Ceausescu and wife executed.

1987

1988

1989

F. Clifton White founds IFES with a five-year, \$1 million USAID grant to "do the world."

IFES and the CSIS begin joint work on a Latin America Election Observation series.

IFES undertakes first project to supply election commodities, in Paraguay.

IFES undertakes pre-election assessment and election observation missions in Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania.

IFES initiates an exchange program between the US Federal Election Commission and the Central Election Commission of the USSR with funding from the Manatt Foundation.