

CIVIC EDUCATION: A PRECONDITION

BY JULIANA G. PILON



I met F. Clifton White, the founder of IFES, in 1991, when he welcomed me as IFES' first Director of Programs and gave me a book he had written, on voter and civic education for young people, with these words: "Without this kind of education, democracy can't get off the ground." The IFES mission has included civic education from the very beginning, first in Nicaragua as early as 1990 and 1991, then on a much larger scale in Romania starting in 1992. The Romanian program culminated in a mature and now self-sustaining NGO called *Centras*, which serves as an umbrella to the major NGOs in the country. In Moldova, IFES left behind another dynamic and self-sustaining organization, ADEPT, after five intensive years of training.

Other civil society programs followed: a five-year NGO-building project in Bosnia, engaging thousands of people with their local government officials; a project in Paraguay to train women, youth and NGOs on fighting corruption; in the DRC, where civic education has contributed to public understanding of the Peace Accords; and many others. The IFES approach recognizes that building a democratic process involves the twin efforts of the citizenry and the government. Once it becomes an effective force, civil society can help a nation maintain the freedoms that are so hard-won and are always difficult to nourish. Civil society can help implement laws, enhance the independence of the judiciary and ensure transparency to guard against corruption.

Education is a key factor in strengthening civil society, and this approach lies at the heart of many current IFES civil society programs. In 2001, for example, IFES signed a Protocol of Understanding with the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan to develop a civic education curriculum for secondary schools. The IFES Civic Education textbook, produced in the Kazakh and Russian languages, is supplemented by other educational programs, including Democracy Summer Camps, Student Action Committees, Student Local Government Days and annual Civic Education Olympiads. This approach is now being successfully applied in several other Central Asian countries and provides a model for engaging the youth in building tomorrow's democracies.

Juliana G. Pilon, former Senior Advisor on Civil Society at IFES, is the Associate Director of the Center for Democracy and Election Management at American University.

ELECTION TRAINING: A NEW APPROACH

BY JOE BAXTER



Early in 2000, IFES recognized it needed a new approach to delivering quality training to the staff of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in preparation for a nationwide voter registration exercise in 2001 and the April 2003 State and Federal Elections. Drawing on its experience in other African countries, IFES recognized that elections are administered not from a capital city but by electoral officials operating at the local level. Nigeria's INEC had local election offices in each of the nation's 774 local government areas, which were responsible for all aspects of election planning and organization within their area.

Standard approaches, such as conducting a training course over a period of months or sending electoral officers abroad for training, were financially prohibitive. Also, the training had to be delivered promptly to fit the Commission's schedule of preparations for the elections. To solve the problem, IFES designed a complete Basic Election Administration Training (BEAT) course that was delivered over a two-week period in each of Nigeria's state capitals.

The BEAT workshops were designed to provide basic skills in election administration at a reasonable cost and in a timeframe that met the needs of the Commission. The workshops provided a comprehensive introduction to the election administration profession and election planning and organization standards. Emphasis was placed on the necessary elements for free and fair elections and on ethical guidelines for election administrators. The workshops also covered planning the election process, logistics and management, conflict management and dealing with the news media.

The workshops employed a participatory, hands-on approach with no lectures and were led by seasoned election administrators from outside Nigeria who had experience both in their own countries and as advisors in other countries. IFES is now working to standardize the BEAT course as a module that can be implemented in any country that requires broad, systematic training of its local election officials.

Joe Baxter is the Senior Advisor on Elections at IFES.

GOVERNANCE: BEYOND ASSESSMENTS

BY *JEFFREY FISCHER*



Over the past two decades, post-conflict peace-keeping operations have occurred with increasing frequency and scope. Fifteen such operations were established in the 40-year span between 1948 and 1988; 26 were set up in the following 8 years. The current United Nations and NATO mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the recent UN intervention in East Timor (UNTAET) have incorporated de facto central, regional and local governments, police and military, engaging thousands of international and local staff in programs to restore order, deliver humanitarian assistance, rebuild institutions, repair civil society and re-establish governance at all levels.

One feature of many post-1989 peace-keeping operations is the inclusion of elections as part of the peace building process. In its first 15 years, IFES focused its post-conflict programs on electoral processes and institutions. IFES played a role in supporting fragile peace processes through electoral assistance in Angola (1992), Mozambique (1994), El Salvador (1994), Haiti (1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1996), Liberia (1997), Eastern Slavonia (1997), Kosovo (2000) and Sierra Leone (2002).

IFES is now pursuing research and analysis of efforts to re-establish political processes and government institutions after violent conflicts. Such processes include truth commissions and post-conflict reconciliation, systems of representation in post-conflict governance, and local governance in areas of dispute. Experience has shown that complex peace operations are difficult to initiate and administer and often result in governance gaps and public service delivery problems. Faulty international administration can produce cynicism and lack of confidence that play out in acts of discontent and protest.

By making post-conflict governance a dedicated field of study, IFES hopes to support the development of viable processes and institutions that will diminish the potential for a return to conflict as a result of failures of governance. Combining the best of practical field experience with academic research, IFES is examining lessons learned and helping to develop more effective peace-building and governance strategies for future post-conflict situations.

Jeffrey Fischer is the Senior Advisor on Governance at IFES.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE: A MUST

BY *KEITH E. HENDERSON*



On January 1, 2004, Haiti will celebrate her 200th anniversary as an independent nation and her rich heritage as the "second free nation of the western world." In 1804, the Haitian Constitution was considered among the most progressive and democratic in the world. But while the Haitian Constitution enshrines the principle of judicial independence, the judiciary has long been subject to an overly dominant executive. The consequences of this dependence are felt throughout Haitian society. The inconsistent and often arbitrary application of the law jeopardizes political and economic security, places property and contractual rights and civil liberties at risk, and exacerbates corruption and poverty. It also breeds public distrust in democratic governance.

IFES, in partnership with USAID, is developing a collaborative program to promote the rule of law in Haiti. Many rule of law practitioners, donors and analysts had concluded that literally hundreds of millions of dollars spent in the 1980s and 90s had little impact, because those reform efforts had focused on a cadre of government officials who either did not have the power, will or interest to reform the judicial system. This experience taught us that an exclusively governmental top-down approach to rule of law reform was not the prescription for success.

Our team recently returned from Port-au-Prince with a new perspective on Haiti's future. Our surveys and interviews revealed a very clear picture of what was really on the hearts and minds of the Haitian people. For the first time, reformers from the human rights, academic, legal and business communities, as well as journalists, judges, teachers and religious leaders, including the Archbishop, engaged in constructive dialogue on how to work hand-in-hand on a common judicial independence agenda. A consensus emerged that real justice in Haiti cannot be assured in practice without the strong support of two key, mutually supporting democratic institutions—an independent judiciary and an independent media. Individual civil liberties and property rights could only be protected by the constitutional cloak of an independent judiciary and the public shield of a free and independent press. These groups are now working closely together to formulate a concrete justice reform program based on targeted coalition building across all sectors of Haitian society.

Keith Henderson is the Senior Advisor on Rule of Law at IFES.