

A HOLISTIC APPROACH



This issue of *Elections Today* includes a series of articles that profile IFES' cutting-edge rule-of-law programs around the world. They collectively make the case that the rule of law is the sine qua non of sustainable democratic and economic reform. The articles' well-known authors, including Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, Peter Kahn and Robert Pastor, as well as our well-respected country partners, such as the Justice Studies Center in Chile, CIDE in Mexico and FORES in Argentina, are all part of the IFES global rule-of-law family.

Together they represent some

of the best legal thinkers and democracy practitioners found anywhere, as evidenced by the pathbreaking research, projects and issues each is involved in with IFES.


On the surface, some of the projects and articles may not appear to be interrelated or connected to a broader sustainable reform agenda; however, a closer reading brings home this message. The stories and issues captured in this issue, and the global lessons learned, clearly show us that developing a rule-of-law culture requires broad public support for several closely related reforms, including: (i) democratic institutions, such as an independent judiciary and independent media; (ii) holistic economic, legal and political reform strategies and programming; (iii) fair and effective enforcement of the law; and (iv) public advocacy and access to information.

IFES' rule-of-law programming is grounded on a solid research methodology and incorporates all of these principles. Some of the best examples are our innovative programs in Haiti and Indonesia, where we have assembled broad-based rule-of-law coalitions and public outreach programs, as well as our groundbreaking research projects related to enforcement and access to justice.

Since IFES released the publication *Guidance for Promoting Judicial Independence and Impartiality*, we have set out, with the generous support of USAID, to take some of these lessons learned around the world through a series of regional and country conferences and workshops. By the end of this year IFES plans to have disseminated this important information to diverse groups in every region of the world. Our most recent

event, in Malawi, resulted in the "Blantyre Communiqué," which includes consensus judicial independence principles and a systematic monitoring and reporting plan of action for member states of the Southern Africa Development Community. Many involved in its preparation believe it has considerable potential and application globally.

Earlier events, such as the regional judicial independence conference in Honduras, also resulted in another first in Central America: a written commitment from all three branches of government to work together on a common agenda in support of an independent judiciary. IFES believes this is the kind of strategic, action-oriented approach that has been missing from most earlier judicial reform efforts. As we cautiously move into the new millennium, let us not lower our sights from the myriad democratic challenges facing this generation. Even though more progress has been achieved than ever thought possible, history teaches us that all the achievements can be lost without the resolve and focus to adapt our efforts to meet new global needs.

We have learned first-hand, by riding the democracy wave of the late 20th century, that making democracy work ultimately requires integrated programs and strategies and societies grounded upon the rule of law. We have also learned that one cannot develop a rule-of-law culture without an independent, accountable judiciary and an independent media. Without these two key democratic institutions, basic constitutional human rights, such as the right to free speech, the right to vote, the right to own property and the right to information, are little more than a democratic illusion. As we look towards a brighter democratic future for all countries, IFES hopes to contribute, in some small way, to the most important challenge facing our generation—globalizing democracy and the rule of law. 

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