

Indonesia Program Summary

Since the fall of the Haji Mohammad Suharto regime in 1998, the International Republican Institute (IRI) has worked in Indonesia to support the country's transition to a stable democracy. IRI has supported the democratic consolidation process by strengthening the country's governing institutions, assisting political parties in better addressing voter concerns and promoting greater women and youth involvement and leadership in the political process.

Political Party Strengthening

Party platforms in Indonesia tend to focus on specific leaders and candidates, remaining highly personality-driven. IRI works with Indonesian political parties at the sub-national level in core political party building areas such as message development, constituent relations, media outreach and internal party organization. By working to enhance organizational structures, political parties can operate in a more transparent and representative manner that allows them to be more approachable to constituents and increase their base of support.

In 2008 and 2009, IRI conducted national and provincial level public opinion research, utilizing the data to consult with political parties and government officials to help them better understand constituent concerns, and develop effective, responsive policies. Additionally, IRI has trained political parties on polling techniques and methodologies in an attempt to encourage parties to gather and analyze public opinion data on their own.

In advance of the April 2009 parliamentary elections, IRI worked with political parties to help them develop and identify issues for political campaigns, utilizing public opinion research. IRI provided training on transparent candidate selection, accountable party finance and effective communication with constituents. Post-election, IRI has conducted political party analysis trainings to aid parties in assessing their electoral performance and formulate their post-election strategies.

Democratic Governance Initiatives

Getting elected to political office is an achievement; governing in a responsible and effective manner is another. IRI has worked on a variety of governance initiatives in Indonesia designed to consolidate democratic gains following Indonesia's historic 2004 and 2009 national elections. IRI's programming addresses the challenges of remaining politically accountable and maintaining contact with constituents between election cycles.

IRI works with provincial and local legislators to develop strategies for elected officials to increase interaction with their constituents. Legislators are also encouraged to work more closely and frequently with local civil society and advocacy groups. IRI has conducted skill-based trainings for legislators on topics such as legal drafting, performance-based budgeting, coalition-building and constituent outreach, increasing their abilities to understand the purpose of effective legislation in addressing social problems.

Past Successes

IRI conducted a two and a half year pre-election training and political party reform initiative, which included national and provincial polling, funded by the United States Agency for International Development. IRI's 10 years of experience in Indonesia positioned it to work effectively leading up to the 2009 legislative election with Indonesia's political parties and elected leaders to build the skills and internal structures needed to address the challenges inherent in democratic transition and governmental decentralization.

With support from the U.S. Department of State, in 2006 IRI launched a two-year women's political initiative program, working with women's wings of provincial political parties to provide women party activists and potential candidates with training to strengthen their skills and to create networks of politically active women. Out of 100 participants, 72 of them were subsequently chosen by their party leaders to serve as legislative candidates, with 64 percent being listed among the top three on their respective party lists and 11 elected to office in 2009.

Following the peace agreement between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement in 2006, IRI conducted party agent trainings in all 21 regencies of Aceh for more than 600 members of all political parties and independent candidates who contested the historic election in December 2006. This effort helped equip party agents with the capacity and tools necessary to effectively observe the elections and register complaints, increasing the credibility and confidence in Aceh's first independent election.

From 2005-2007, IRI successfully conducted an innovative E-Governance program to increase the accountability, transparency and constructive engagement of provincial-level elected officials by their constituents in Yogyakarta, East Java and South Sulawesi. In a political environment where there was little legislator-constituent interaction, these programs helped begin to improve communication between constituents and legislators.

