

South Africa Program Summary

Operating since 1929, the [South African Institute of Race Relations](#) (SAIRR) has built a reputation as an independent, nonprofit research and policy organization dedicated to defending civil liberties, individual rights, the culture of private enterprise and the rule of law. SAIRR serves as a vibrant instrument of democracy promotion whose contributions help advance democratic governance practices in South Africa and remains one of the few organizations that serves as a watchdog on government actions.

Since South Africa ended its system of racial apartheid in 1994, the International Republican Institute (IRI) has partnered with SAIRR, through the Free Society Project, a major component of SAIRR's analysis and watchdog efforts, which serves to ensure that basic democratic freedoms remain at the forefront of public debate. Currently, South Africa is facing many challenges, from a struggling economy to a failing education system, rising unemployment rates and increased dissatisfaction with the ruling African National Congress-led government. SAIRR's research and analysis provides South Africans and the international community with a clearer picture of how effective the government functions, which allows for a robust debate and proposal of alternative policies to be considered in areas where South Africa lags behind.

Through monthly and annual publications, regular contributions in the South African media and briefings for groups in both the public and private sector, SAIRR's Free Society Project provides measured analysis of government policy and current affairs. By offering data and views on political and economic developments, SAIRR and the Free Society Project stimulate policy debate in both the South African and foreign media, on the floor of Parliament, and in the halls of government ministries. SAIRR's major publications that are part of the Free Society Project are the monthly *Fast Facts* and the annual *South Africa Survey*.

Recognizing that local government is the level closest to the people and has the most impact on citizens' daily lives, IRI supports SAIRR's analysis of the effectiveness and performance of South Africa's local government structure. Corruption, mismanagement, inadequately skilled workforce and ineffective service delivery have all contributed to weak local government institutions that are unable to perform basic functions. Through this local government research project, SAIRR studies the performance of local governments through in-depth discussions with local officials and citizens; analyzes key government performance indicators; examines the relationship between national-level and local-level government institutions; proposes solutions to challenges identified; and authors various publications based on the findings of their research and analysis.