

# South Sudan

## OVERVIEW

### South Sudan Program Summary

On July 9, 2011, the former semi-autonomous region of South Sudan was officially recognized as a sovereign state. Independence, mandated by the January 2011 self-determination referendum, was one of the final elements of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended a decades-long civil war between northern and southern Sudan and ushered in a period of great opportunity for the country.

To support South Sudan, the International Republican Institute (IRI) engages with political parties and government institutions to share information about their roles and responsibilities in the democratic process. Through its activities, IRI promotes the inclusion of those who were previously excluded from open political participation, such as youth, women and other marginalized groups. Understanding the need for legitimate and democratic institutions at all levels of government, IRI programs support participants at the national, regional and local levels. IRI has worked in South Sudan since 2004, and is currently supported by a grant from the [United States Agency for International Development](#).

### Political Party Development

IRI works with the current ruling party of South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, as well as opposition parties to support the development and organization of political parties throughout the country. Using a comprehensive, multifaceted approach, IRI supports the efforts of South Sudan's political parties to improve their organizational structures and internal democracy, promote competition and consensus-building, and develop issue-based platforms, robust public policy and other state-building legal frameworks.

IRI continues to support inter-party dialogue and provides a forum for opposition parties to voice their positions and concerns. In no place is this reinforcement more evident than the [Political Parties' Leadership Forum Secretariat](#), which provides a neutral setting for all parties to actively engage on national bills, laws and other issues relevant to the parties and people of South Sudan. The secretariat also serves as a resource center where parties can conduct research on past and upcoming national legislation as well as topics pertaining to democratic principles.

IRI actively engages women and youth members of political parties to promote their continued incorporation into party and governmental positions. The Institute's current focus on enhancing the functionality of women's leagues within parties will ultimately allow women members to more effectively organize, recruit and promote issues important to their respective leagues. To ensure the political participation of South Sudanese youth, [IRI's youth leadership academies](#) are designed to address the concerns of young political aspirants in South Sudan. Through the program, IRI will nurture a crop of young South Sudanese politicians that are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to play a greater role in the development of the new country.

## Parliamentary Support

IRI has worked with the [National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan](#) – formerly the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly – since its formation in 2005. The Institute played an active role in hosting constitutional deliberations prior to the passage of the transitional constitution on July 7, 2011, and continues to work with legislators as they work to pass a permanent constitution by 2015.

Currently, IRI's programming focuses on assisting committees and the women's caucuses of the national legislature and the state legislative assemblies. Committee members and staff participate in workshops focused on independent research and analysis, policy development and constituent outreach. Such activities allow legislators and committees to function more efficiently and, ultimately, become more independent of executive authority. IRI also works with committee leadership to prepare committees for public hearings on pending legislation by providing guidance on the legislative process as well as the report drafting and mark-up processes.

## Campaigns and Elections

IRI has and will continue to play an active role in elections throughout South Sudan. In 2010, the Institute assisted political parties and party polling agents across the country as they prepared for the national elections. IRI also provided participants with manuals outlining essential skills for running efficient, strategic and dynamic campaigns.

In the months leading up to the January 2011 self-determination referendum, IRI was actively involved training political party agents and placed special emphasis on the role political parties would play in observing the referendum. The Institute hosted workshops in all 10 states and 78 counties, helping to prepare more than 9,000 observers from almost every registered political party.

As South Sudan prepares for elections in 2015 and beyond, IRI will continue to play an active but complementary role in the development of the country's electoral system, the skills building of political actors on electoral processes and the preparation of political parties to effectively compete in elections.

## Public Opinion Research

In September 2011, IRI conducted the first-ever national [public opinion poll in South Sudan](#). The survey assessed a wide range of issues related to democracy and governance, including: the general environment and government priorities, voting behaviors and attitudes toward democracy, attitudes toward women and general demographics of the country's people.

IRI also conducted a [June 2012 public opinion poll](#), which focused on South Sudan's Greater Equatoria region – Central, Eastern and Western Equatoria states. Public opinion surveys are unique in their ability to access the general sentiment of the people. This vital information is utilized by political parties and government officials to create public policy that addresses the needs and desires of constituents.