

Somaliland Program Summary

Somaliland's declaration of independence from Somalia in 1991 commenced the semi-autonomous nation's subsequent struggle to gain recognition as a sovereign state from the international community. More than two decades later, the struggle persists, though the country's democratic gains have continued to reinforce the distinction between it and greater Somalia. Since 2001, the International Republican Institute (IRI) has worked alongside Somalilanders supporting the country's steady democratization. Over the course of the past decade, IRI has worked with local stakeholders to incorporate democratic principles into a culture characterized by an intricate and deeply-rooted clan system. Like Somaliland's democracy, IRI's work has grown increasingly dynamic as the country's political space has continued to open.

Legislative Support

Working with IRI, the Somaliland National Parliament has modernized and increased constituent outreach. The successful formation and development of issue-based parliamentary caucuses through funding from the [United States Agency for International Development](#) has showcased IRI's current legislative strengthening efforts. IRI explored the concept of issue-based caucuses with members of parliament and emphasized the value of incorporating citizen input into the policymaking process. Members of parliament sharing common interests subsequently congregated around two priority issues in Somaliland – healthcare and the environment – ultimately forming the country's first ever Health and Green caucuses. Both caucuses have since conducted consultations with various stakeholders throughout Somaliland during a series of cross-regional field hearings. The formation of issue-based caucuses has not only increased policymaker interaction with citizens, but has also given the parliament with a healthy degree of oversight on the Somaliland government.

Political Party Assistance

Since 2002, IRI has remained involved in the growth of the country's political parties and associations, providing nonpartisan support. In 2011 Somaliland's political space widened to allow for the creation of new political associations and three new political parties emerged as those to be officially recognized for the next 10 year period. Throughout the transition IRI has offered organizational and functional support to the nation's new political entities and is currently working with national, regional and district-level political party leadership to strengthen decentralization and internal party organization.

Democratic Governance

Local council elections in November 2012 ushered a host of newly-elected local leaders into office, a transition that IRI, with funding from the United Kingdom's [Department for International Development](#), will support by offering workshops to local councilors in areas such as leadership, public sector management and constituent outreach while fostering citizen engagement in the process by introducing citizen-issue discussion forums and issue-based working groups.