



Extracted from *Direct Democracy: The International IDEA Handbook*
© International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2008.

International IDEA, Strömsborg, 103 34 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone +46-8-698 37 00, Fax: +46-8-20 24 22
E-mail: info@idea.int Web: www.idea.int

About International IDEA

What is International IDEA?

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. Its objective is to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. IDEA acts as a catalyst for democracy building by providing knowledge resources, expertise and a platform for debate on democracy issues. It works together with policy makers, donor governments, UN organizations and agencies, regional organizations and others engaged in the field of democracy building.

What does International IDEA do?

Democracy building is complex and touches on many areas including constitutions, electoral systems, political parties, legislative arrangements, the judiciary, central and local government, and formal and traditional government structures. International IDEA is engaged with all of these issues and offers to those in the process of democratization:

- knowledge resources, in the form of handbooks, databases, websites and expert networks;
- policy proposals to provoke debate and action on democracy issues; and
- assistance to democratic reforms in response to specific national requests.

Areas of work

International IDEA's notable areas of expertise are:

- *Constitution-building processes.* A constitutional process can lay the foundations for peace and development, or plant seeds of conflict. International IDEA is able

to provide knowledge and make policy proposals for constitution building that are genuinely nationally owned, are sensitive to gender and conflict-prevention dimensions, and responds effectively to national priorities.

- *Electoral processes.* The design and management of elections has a strong impact on the wider political system. International IDEA seeks to ensure the professional management and independence of elections, adapt electoral systems, and build public confidence in the electoral process.
- *Political parties.* Political parties form the essential link between voters and the government, yet polls taken across the world show that political parties enjoy a low level of confidence. International IDEA analyses the functioning of political parties, the public funding of political parties, and their management and relations with the public.
- *Democracy and gender.* International IDEA recognizes that if democracies are to be truly democratic, then women—who make up over half of the world’s population—must be represented on equal terms with men. International IDEA develops comparative resources and tools designed to advance the participation and representation of women in political life.
- *Democracy assessments.* Democratization is a national process. IDEA’s State of Democracy methodology allows people to assess their own democracy instead of relying on externally produced indicators or rankings of democracies.

Where does International IDEA work?

International IDEA works worldwide. It is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has offices in Latin America, Africa and Asia.