

EVALUATION SUMMARY



Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Office of Policy and Evaluation

Institute for Representative Government (IRG) Program

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the IRG Program in meeting its goal to enhance the understanding of the U.S. political system of representative democracy and the U.S. Congress among foreign parliamentarians and government officials from developing or newly established democracies.

Key Findings

- **Changes in Participant Understanding and Attitudes**
 - IRG alumni reported an increased understanding of U.S. democracy and democratic principles (80%), the U.S. government and U.S. Congressional structure (73%), and the U.S. lawmaking process (69%).
 - 82% reported that the IRG program experience helped provide them with a more informed and broader perspective of the United States, and 60% indicated the program helped them develop a greater appreciation of alternative opinions and political processes.
- **Changes in Participant Behavior and Condition**
 - 97% of alumni reported the IRG program was at least somewhat valuable for their professional development.
 - Alumni indicated sharing what they learned about the United States and its government and people with professional colleagues (97%), family and friends (90%), and their community (85%).
 - Alumni reported the IRG program helped them develop an interest in professional collaborations with people in the United States (58%) and with other members of their IRG delegation (76%).
- **Organization and Community Impact**
 - Alumni who maintained contact with their delegation members (83%) and with people in the United States (76%) indicated these contacts helped them reinforce or sustain democratic practices in their country.
 - Alumni reported that sustained contacts from the United States helped them inform their colleagues and community about the U.S. system of democracy (77%), initiate or develop democratic practices in their country (65%), and open or sustain a political dialogue with the United States (60%).
 - Alumni reported successfully legislating or enacting policies at the national level (39%) and at the regional or local level (18%) that were partly influenced by what they learned during the IRG program.

Project Information: The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted the evaluation from September 2001 to April 2003. Data collection took place in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Jordan, Mexico, Turkey and Uruguay. A survey was administered to the entire population of 1988-2001 IRG program alumni (n=208) in the study countries, resulting in a response rate of 52%. AIR conducted interviews with IRG alumni in Argentina and Turkey, the Director of the Institute for Representative Government (IRG), program administrators at the U.S. Embassy in each study country and from the Department of State's Office of Citizen Exchanges, and U.S. government officials and/or staffers who met with IRG delegations.

Program Information: The IRG Program, founded in 1988, has brought over 520 foreign parliamentarians, and government and military officials from 30 countries to the United States for two-week professional exchanges. The program is designed to give these officials from developing or newly established democracies a better understanding of the U.S. political system of representative democracy through opportunities to engage and meet with Members of Congress and state legislators and their staff, government officials at the federal, state and local levels, and occasionally with non-governmental organizations. Program information can be found at <http://exchanges.state.gov>.

Contact Information: For more information regarding this evaluation, or to request a copy of the 145-page report, please contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (202) 632-6325, email ecaevaluation@state.gov, or by mail at State Annex 5, 2200 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20522-0505. Additional program information may be found at <http://exchanges.state.gov>.