



Impact Report



IREX



1968 - 2018  
INVESTING IN PEOPLE.  
INSPIRING CHANGE.



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## A MESSAGE TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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Dear friends of IREX,

This year, IREX celebrates its 50th anniversary – a momentous milestone in our history. While IREX’s work has changed dramatically in the past five decades, our core approach endures: We invest in people who, in turn, promote understanding and create positive change in their communities, their countries, and the world.

IREX’s very first exchanges—between scholars, teachers, and students in the United States and Soviet bloc—were based on the notion that individuals, trading ideas across borders, expand their own horizons while collectively building mutual understanding between nations.

As our work has expanded to other parts of the world, we’ve made investments in other changemakers – journalists, civil society activists, government officials, and young people.

We believe that by cultivating leaders, by giving them enriching new professional experiences and networks, they become better able to lead change in their communities and build more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies around the world.

We believe that by strengthening institutions—whether schools, civic organizations, social enterprises, or governments—change can become enduring and reach even more people.

We believe that by expanding access to quality education and independent media, individuals and communities have access to the information and analytical skills they need to make wise decisions for themselves and with others.

And to truly ensure that just, prosperous, and inclusive societies endure over the long term, we need to focus our energies on young people at a time when we are now witnessing the largest youth population in human history.

In the following pages, we share just a few examples of these investments in people, institutions, and communities from our early years to the present.


All of us on the IREX team express our profound gratitude to you and to others who have, through the years, made IREX what it is today.

With thanks,

IREX President and CEO Kristin Lord and the IREX team

At IREX, we strive for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world—where individuals reach their full potential, governments serve their people, and communities thrive. We invest in people who, in turn, create change in their own communities and forge people-to-people bridges between nations.

We work with partners in more than 100 countries in four areas essential to progress: cultivating leaders, empowering youth, strengthening institutions, and increasing access to quality education and information.



Last year, IREX's  
work touched  
the lives of

**15 million**  
people



■ Extending access  
to education and  
information

**1 million**  
students

Will learn from  
teachers IREX trained  
in more effective and  
engaging teaching  
pedagogies



■ Empowering  
youth

**336,479**  
citizens

Benefited from  
community  
initiatives led by  
IREX-trained youth



■ Strengthening  
institutions

**3,493**  
institutions

Were better able to  
serve their constituents  
with support from IREX



■ Cultivating  
leaders

**45,509**  
leaders

Sharpened their  
leadership skills  
through IREX  
fellowships and  
trainings

## OUR HISTORY

# 50 YEARS OF INVESTING IN PEOPLE & INSPIRING CHANGE

### PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING DURING THE COLD WAR

1968



Fifty years ago, IREX was founded to exchange people and ideas between the United States and the former Soviet bloc countries at a time of high geopolitical tension. According to IREX's founding documents, a centralized organization was needed to "act with authority on both sides of the Atlantic ... and be immune to political pressures from all sides." In its first 10 years, IREX facilitated 1,500 exchanges between the US and Soviet bloc. IREX-supported scholars wrote a combined 3,000 books and articles, helping to promote mutual understanding during a tense geopolitical period.

### SUPPORTING NEWLY INDEPENDENT NATIONS

1989



After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Russia and the former Soviet bloc countries faced urgent challenges as they transitioned to become newly independent countries. With deep experience and relationships in the region, IREX supported these countries as they developed independent civil society and adapted education and media organizations. IREX connected millions of people to the internet for the first time; forged partnerships between Russian and American institutions to deliver better health care, education, and public works; and trained 5,000 young leaders for a time that demanded a new generation of political leadership.

## GOING GLOBAL IN RESPONSE TO PRESSING NEEDS

2003



IREX decided to “go global” in 2003, dramatically expanding its work in scale, scope, and geographic reach to meet evolving needs. To help foster growth and stability in the Middle East, IREX launched initiatives to strengthen higher education, secondary school teachers, and job training. IREX brought its background in leadership development to Latin America and Africa to train thousands of future leaders. Building on our expertise expanding access to information, IREX helped build a network of libraries in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere to connect more people to the internet and help them become savvy citizens.

## AN ENDURING COMMITMENT TO INVESTING IN PEOPLE

2018



Today, IREX still conducts people-to-people exchanges and maintains a strong presence in Eurasia, though our work has extended to 120 countries on six continents. Throughout these decades of change, our focus on people, institutions, and communities has been steady. We maintain our commitment to building a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world.

**SEE OUR COMMITMENT TO  
INVESTING IN HUMAN POTENTIAL**



## INVESTING IN FUTURE LEADERS

Investing in leaders has been at the core of IREX's work since its founding. After the Cold War, newly independent countries needed leaders who could build open societies and foster economic growth. For over 20 years, IREX was proud to run the Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program in partnership with the US Department of State, which supported Eurasia's rising leaders through academic study and professional training at American colleges and universities in nearly all 50 states.

In addition to excelling in their academic studies and fostering cultural understanding, graduate students and professionals from 15 countries

participated in professional development in US private, public, and nonprofit sectors – gaining skills and workplace experience, while exposing their host organizations to international perspectives.

Today, nearly 5,000 Edmund S. Muskie alumni include high-ranking diplomats, anti-corruption activists, education advocates, business leaders, and well-known journalists. In their diverse career paths, these alumni share a commitment to public service and make vital contributions to their countries' economic and democratic growth.



## EMPOWERING THOUSANDS OF YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS



**95%**  
**of Mandela Washington Fellows**

plan to further engage with US professionals after they return home.

*\*Data from 2014 to 2017*

IREX adapted what it learned developing leaders in Eastern Europe to other parts of the world. Today, the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders is, in part, modeled after the Muskie Fellowship.

The Mandela Washington Fellowship has brought thousands of young leaders from sub-Saharan Africa to the United States for executive leadership training in public management, civic leadership, and business and entrepreneurship.

Since the Fellowship's inception, IREX has partnered with more than 450 institutions from the private, nonprofit, and governmental sectors in the

United States and Africa, deepening diplomatic, commercial, and cross-cultural relationships.

Africa boasts the world's youngest population, yet its leadership is aging. Six of the top 10 longest serving leaders are in Africa. By investing in a new generation of young African leaders, the Fellowship seeks to spur prosperity, accountable and effective governance, peace and security, and strengthen the bonds between the US and Africa. Today, nearly 4,000 Fellows comprise a prestigious network of young African leaders at the forefront of change and innovation.



## FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND REBUILDING CITIZEN TRUST

Corruption plagues all too many countries around the world, robbing citizens of funding for services and undermining public confidence in government. Citizens deserve to have stolen assets returned to benefit those who were robbed and demonstrate that impunity will no longer be tolerated.

Through our experience working with the BOTA Foundation in Kazakhstan, IREX is proud to have created one of the only successful models of returning stolen assets to citizens.

In the 1990s, government officials in Kazakhstan received bribes from foreign companies seeking drilling rights in the country. After the governments of Switzerland and the United States reclaimed \$115

million in disputed assets, they were left with a challenge: What should they do with the money?

In partnership with these governments and the World Bank, IREX established the BOTA Foundation to redistribute the funds to benefit the people of Kazakhstan. The repatriated assets went to scholarships for poor Kazakhstani youth to attend university, small cash transfers for families living in poverty, and social services for people with disabilities, orphans, and at-risk youth. In all, BOTA directly reached 208,000 individuals.

To date, the BOTA Foundation is one of the only cases in which illicitly obtained assets were recovered and redistributed in a meaningful way that touched the lives of thousands of people in the country from which they were stolen.





Positive attitudes toward police grew from 40% to 73% among Ukrainians who participated in the events.

## BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN CITIZENS AND POLICE

Today, IREX continues to develop innovative models to help communities—and entire countries—confront and prevent corruption. For example, before the 2004 “Orange Revolution,” the Ukrainian police force was notoriously corrupt. Police officers routinely stopped citizens to demand bribes and prosecutors regularly dropped charges against politically connected criminals.

Recently, Ukraine has made strides in eliminating police corruption – retraining and relaunching entirely new community police forces in select cities. But the scars of corruption remain. Lingering distrust of police continues to undermine efforts to keep communities safe.

IREX’s Citizen Engagement and Reform Communication program helps build trust between the police, citizens, nonprofits, local government, and media. Through community engagement events hosted by libraries and other community hubs, citizens and police replace suspicion with trust and understanding through dialogue and educational sessions about political reform efforts.

The program also addresses gender inclusion, as historically domestic violence went underreported. IREX launched a public education campaign that reached more than 1.5 million residents, which helped to change attitudes about domestic violence, educate people about how to seek help, and build trust with law enforcement.



## IMPROVING HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE EDUCATION

In addition to facilitating the exchange of students and researchers to enrich their own work and personal development, IREX focused on working to improve education at the systemic level.

In the 1990s, many newly independent states needed to develop new materials for reforming school systems. To assist the development of curricula and teaching tools, IREX conducted intensive, four-month pedagogical trainings for educators in the US and former Soviet bloc. Teachers and administrators learned the latest best

practices in teaching business administration, economics, journalism, foreign language instruction, law, political science, and sociology.

IREX also brought 60 Russian teachers and graduate students to US colleges and universities each year to serve as teaching assistants in social sciences, business education, and English courses. It gave Russian educators an opportunity to collect teaching materials and observe American teaching methods, while providing their US counterparts with a global perspective on educational issues.



**90%**  
**of teachers**

trained by IREX share  
new global perspectives with  
their classrooms.

## INVESTING IN TEACHERS

Today, much of IREX's work to improve education centers on teachers. Over the course of their careers, the average secondary school teacher will reach 6,000 students. We work with teachers to improve their skills so that they are more effective in helping their students learn and grow.

IREX now implements multiple Fulbright teacher programs, bringing hundreds of teachers from around the world to the US every year, and sending hundreds of US teachers abroad. Educators receive in-depth training and hands-on experience using the latest teaching methods to engage students, such as project-based learning and tailored instruction.

These programs focus on global learning, which enriches the experience by exposing teachers to new and different cultures, enhancing their cross-cultural competency.

Ninety percent of teacher participants share these new global perspectives with their classrooms, exposing their students to international challenges and unique world views on how to address them. In today's world, it's an essential skill that students need to be engaged, global citizens and succeed in the modern workplace.



## CONNECTING MILLIONS TO THE INTERNET

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, newly independent countries gained access to information that was previously restricted. The internet was still in its infancy and IREX saw an opportunity to connect people to the World Wide Web and, by extension, new perspectives and cutting-edge information about education, health, science and technology, economics, human rights, and governance.

IREX established more than 50 public access hubs throughout Eurasia, linking over 1 million people to the internet for the first time. The access points, plus computer literacy training, contributed to

the professional and intellectual development of communities and individuals throughout Eurasia.

Civic groups sprung up around these community hubs, sparking lively debates about election ethics, independent media, and political reform. The information technology skills acquired by many training participants helped them to join the workforce. As Marine Asatryan from Spitak, Armenia recalled: "When I was 16 years old, the Spitak earthquake happened, after which I became disabled. Thanks to [the IREX trainings] I found a job and become integrated into the community."





## ENSURING ACCESS TO QUALITY INFORMATION THROUGH INDEPENDENT MEDIA



**3.3**  
**million people**

accessed information  
through community centers  
supported by IREX around  
the world.

*\*Data from FY17*

Today, IREX works to ensure that citizens have access to quality information in order to make informed decisions about their lives and the future of their countries.

As Sri Lanka emerges from a brutal conflict that spanned more than 20 years, independent media serves as a vital forum for national dialogue to advance reconciliation. Through the Media Empowerment for a Democratic Sri Lanka program—IREX's first large-scale media development initiative in Asia—citizens have greater access to balanced, reliable, and objective news and information in order to effectively contribute to this dialogue.

IREX works with media outlets to improve the quality of their reporting, including setting high editorial standards, developing new business models that allow media organizations to thrive in the digital age, and honing techniques to surface sidelined issues and voices. Working collaboratively, journalists report stories that help heal the wounds of war, focusing on transitional justice, social cohesion, and national integration.

1968

50 YEARS OF INVESTING  
IN PEOPLE & INSPIRING  
CHANGE

2018



100+

Lives touched

15 million



5

Countries

120



9

IREX  
employees

400



8

IREX  
projects

70



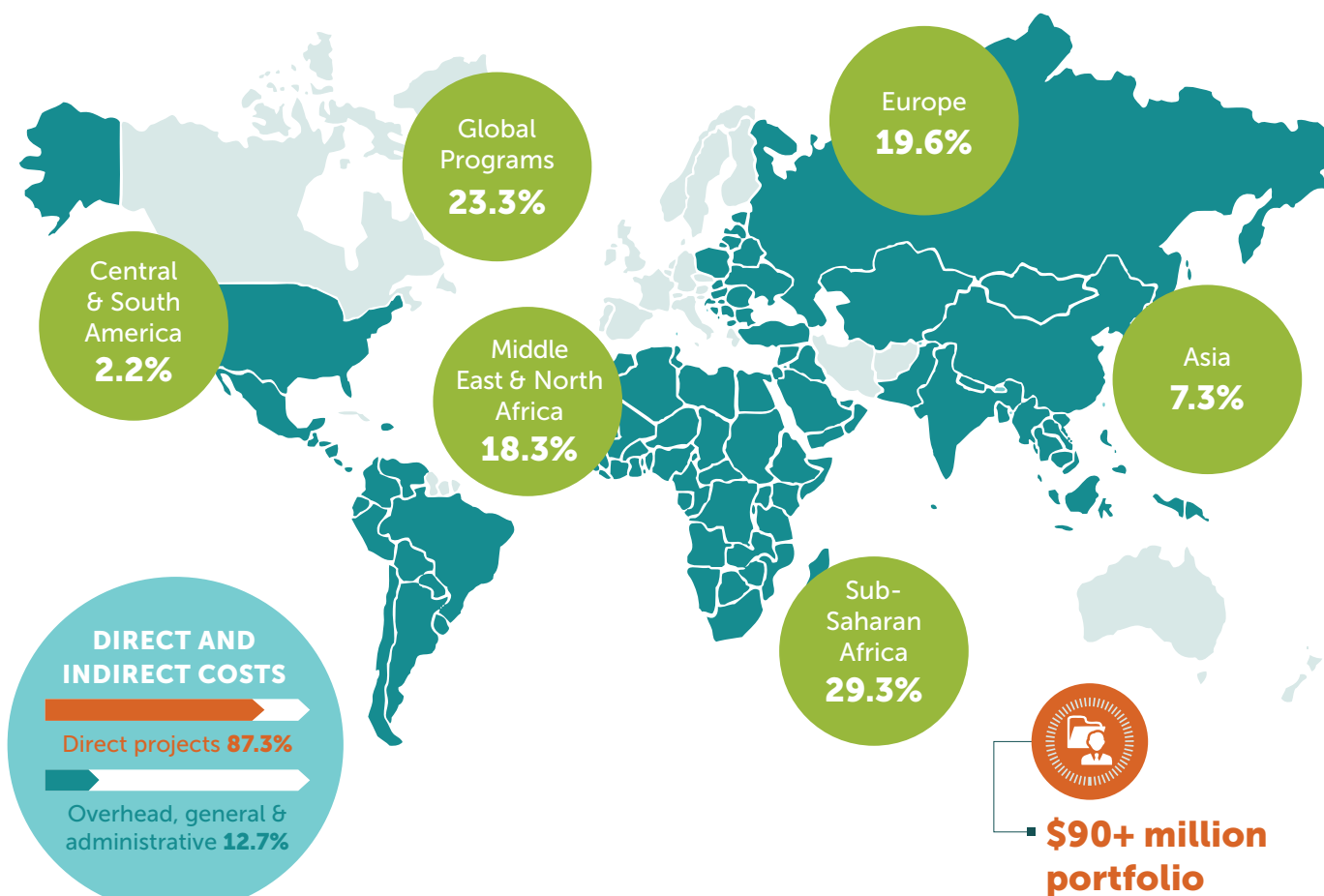
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Education

Areas of Work



## PROGRAM EXPENDITURES BY REGION



### THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to the foundations, corporations, government agencies, and global citizens that generously support our efforts. Throughout the past 50 years of change, our focus on investing in people and inspiring change has remained steady. Thank you for helping us celebrate our history and support our future.





IREX is a global development and education organization. We strive for a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world—where individuals reach their full potential, governments serve their people, and communities thrive.  
IREX is a registered 501(c)(3) organization.

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Learn more: [WWW.IREX.ORG](http://WWW.IREX.ORG)



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