

**FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AN INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY
2003-2005**

San José, April 2003

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THE NEED FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND THE THREE-YEAR PLAN

The experience that the IIHR has gained in more than twenty years of uninterrupted work in the hemisphere provided the raw material for this study as a first step toward a systematic, effective, efficient institutional response that will be reflected in a strategic plan for the short, medium and long term.

One of the Institute's greatest strengths is its continuous process of internal review. Its activities are subject to frequent fine-tuning so that its action and strategy remain pertinent to conditions in the field of human rights and democracy, which are in a constant state of flux. The Institute must change in order to keep up with the reality of the region where it operates, and it has to remain highly responsive, flexible and adaptable. During these two decades, the Institute has reassessed its programs from time to time and readjusted its institutional structure; but all too often this exercise has been governed simple intuition of those in leadership, rather than the product of a rigorous process of systematic, strategic thinking.

The IIHR has sought during the past several years to obtain a more impartial perception of its work. It has contracted two broad-based, comprehensive external evaluations,¹ requested strategic assessment studies from several donors,² held sessions specifically to examine its future and that of its departments,³ and engaged in systematic communication with many former participants of its activities and with numerous government institutions and social organizations with which it has partnered over these decades. More recently, the Institute has brought together groups of experts in different fields for workshops to set priorities, lines of action and mechanisms for the future.⁴ It has also held in-house forums to elicit ideas from staff members.

In 1998, for the first time the Institute formulated an explicit, systematic vision of human rights and democracy in a changed world and revisited its mission based on this new environment.⁵ To complete

1 Cox-Shifter Report (1997) and Bolívar-Thompson Report (1999).

2 The most recent are *2001 External Strategic Assessment* by PRODECA and USAID (2002) and a report entitled *Cooperación de USAID con el IDH en un futuro cercano* (2002).

3 *Informe de consultoría sobre Visión-Valores en el Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos* (2002), consultation meetings to reposition CAPEL (2000 and 2001) and *Informe de consultoría sobre el sentido y acción de CAPEL frente a las nuevas realidades de la democracia en el Continente Americano* (2000).

4 Meetings of experts on social inclusion, public policy for access to justice, and security (2002).

5 The final document, *The current outlook for Human Rights and Democracy*, was approved by the Board of Directors on 6 March, 1998.

the exercise and increase its impact, in early 2000 the Institute designed a three-year plan of a number of regional actions for the active promotion of human rights; the purpose of which was to work more systematically and respond more effectively to challenges in the field of human rights and democracy posed by current conditions in the hemisphere. The present document is an effort to take the next step in the process begun at that time, providing a logical and conceptual framework on which to prepare and develop a strategic plan.

The Institute has developed this framework on the basis of a study that is carried out earlier this year that examined the outlook for democracy and human rights in the Americas and identified new challenges along with others that are on-going, and still unresolved.⁶ These conditions and challenges, coupled with experience that the IIHR has gained in more than twenty years of uninterrupted work in the hemisphere has provided the raw material for this study as a first step toward a systematic, effective, efficient institutional response that will be reflected in a strategic plan for the short, medium and long term.

This framework document, an important step forward, begins by defining certain basic concepts. It then proceeds to formulate strategic goals and to develop matrix of activities consisting of three basic, interrelated components: setting of topical and geopolitical priorities, making intensive use of working tools and new technologies, and institutional reconfiguration.⁷

6 *The current outlook for human rights and democracy*, IIHR, March 2003. The text presents opinions emanating from a number of advisory meetings and the results of research activities undertaken in different countries over the past two years.

7 This document was prepared following review of reports by the Executive Director and 45 internal documents produced from 2000 to 2002.

FORMULATING STRATEGIC GOALS

The IIHR will believe that the strategic goals for human rights and democracy on which it must concentrate its efforts and toward which it must focus its work are:

- promoting inclusive, transparent political systems;
- developing and supporting good governance;
- combating social exclusion and poverty.

In its early years, the IIHR centered its attention on defending civil and political rights and restoring democracy. It then turned the comprehensive promotion of all human rights, strengthening democratic institutions and protecting rights and freedoms. Now, as it enters the new millennium, it finds that the outlook for democracy and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean has changed. Based on its evaluation of new conditions and on the experiences and skills acquired during its more than twenty years, the Institute has decided to set three over-arching strategic goals for the next three years (2003-2005), all of them intended to advance the protection and enjoyment of human rights. These three goals will become the focal points around which the Institute will target its efforts, become more responsive, select its projects, schedule its activities and evaluate its successes and failures.

Some of the basic concepts in our work are:

Inclusive political systems: those in which all individuals and groups in a given society have a full sense of ownership; can participate in defining and exercising political power, and are in a true real position to exercise their human rights.

Transparent political systems: those in which representatives of the State provide clear, complete information on actions taken and decisions made in the exercise of their public functions; are subject to- effective mechanisms for management control and administrative and disciplinary measures, and render an accounting of their actions to the citizenry.

Good governance: an administration that safeguards the lives and property of the individuals it represents; adequately meets the basic needs of the population; responds to citizen demands; works to reduce social poverty and inequality, and strives effectively to achieve sustainable human development.

Social exclusion: various forms of discrimination against groups for reasons of gender, ethnic origin, religion, political or ideological conviction, social origin or socioeconomic condition, and practices that fail to respect differences or value diversity.

Poverty: a situation in which persons or groups are unable to meet their basic minimum economic, social and cultural needs.

It is no longer enough merely to claim that countries have democratic regimes, governments chosen in free and fair elections, and formal mechanisms of representation, even though these elements do mark substantive progress that must be defended at all cost. We do not agree with recent attacks leveled against representative democracy, whose intrinsic value is undeniable and must not be questioned. Indeed, the inter-American system as a whole, and the human rights system in particular, have established democracy as a cornerstone of development and the States of the region recognized as much when they signed the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Human rights cannot exist in the absence of representative democracy. Nevertheless, democracy itself stands endangered if the political systems operating within it do not become truly inclusive and transparent, if good government disappears and if the State fails to generate conditions of development capable of overcoming the endemic poverty of our societies. The emergence of practices and viewpoints that would restrict human rights, the temptations of authoritarianism, and the rising exasperation among ever more numerous social sectors reveal a greater depth of dissatisfaction with current political systems and are an unfortunate response to weaknesses and gaps in political systems and to social exclusion and poverty. The IIHR continues to defend democracy and retains its commitment to human rights, seeking every possible means to ensure that political systems are inclusive and transparent, and will work to overcome social exclusion, poverty and inequality.

THE INSTITUTE'S THEMATIC AND GEOPOLITICAL FOCUS

The Institute in order to avoid spreading itself too thin and, to improve its effectiveness, must develop its own agenda, targeting its institutional action on those rights and groups of rights for which it can best make meaningful contributions based on its experience and expertise and the quality of those contributions taking into account priorities, based on its assessment of the current situation.

In the judgment of the IIHR, the strategic goals in general presuppose a clear priority: to guarantee that all human beings have access to rights and freedoms, especially the poor and those that have been traditionally excluded. The Institute defines “access” as the material possibility of exercising a right. Even if a given right has received formal legal recognition, it cannot be exercised in the absence of a certain set of conditions. IIHR analysis has shown that access arises from the convergence of various elements: legality, effective institutions, public policies, social practices, and human rights information and education.

Legality can be measured on two levels. At the national level, it means that domestic legal norms are in place, both formally and materially, that meet at least the standards established in international law. At the regional level, it means the existence of international legal instruments that guarantee due recognition and full exercise of rights for the most vulnerable groups and for the elimination of practices that violate human rights.

Institutionality is the existence of efficient, effective government entities that ensure the exercise of rights and freedoms, promote mechanisms to allow such exercise and effectively punish violations of those rights and freedoms.

Public policies are an expression of the government's political will to protect rights and freedoms. They take shape as lines of action, a funding program, and the implementation of institutional mechanisms to protect and promote human rights and to sanction those who infringe on these rights.

Social practices include the whole array of ideas and actions in the field of human rights practiced by a society and its constituent groups.

Information and education are indispensable if the population is to know which of its rights are internationally and nationally recognized and how to exercise them; how the universal and inter-American protection systems function; which public institutions are responsible for protecting and promoting these rights, and which ones apply sanctions if rights are violated; who decides on public

policies for human rights; how such decisions are made, and what these policies are. Only through education can people come to understand what their rights are and how to exercise them. This awareness in turn generates a culture of human rights and motivates society and its constituent sectors and groups to organize themselves and find mechanisms by which they can truly exercise their rights; participate in shaping public policies for human rights, pressure government institutions to fulfill their duties in this field and account for their actions, and report and punish violations that occur.

Given this conceptual description, the essential task of the IIHR is to see that everyone enjoys guaranteed access to his or her full rights and freedoms. Indeed, the Institute is firmly convinced that human rights work can only be comprehensive and that these rights are a single, unified system within which economic, social and cultural rights are no less important than civil and political rights.

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On these two premises, the Institute believes it should emphasize four sets of rights:

- (i) justice and security,
- (ii) political participation,
- (iii) human rights education, and
- (iv) the effective exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, which presents the Institute with a challenge as its experience in this area is obviously less than in the aforementioned.

This definition of priorities in no way restricts the Institute from working on behalf of other rights or sets of rights if this proves to be necessary for specific or strategic reasons.

Access to justice means that all persons, regardless of sex, national or ethnic origin or economic, social and cultural conditions, are in a position to take any conflict, be it individual or collective, to the system for the administration of justice and to obtain a fair, prompt resolution by autonomous and independent courts. The system of justice includes all institutions and procedures established by society, whether formal, traditional or alternative, for determining rights and resolving conflicts, first domestically and secondarily, at the regional level.

The IIHR must support every effort to guarantee accessible, effective, swift justice for all persons as a mechanism for processing individual complaints and social conflicts and as a guarantee to restore

rights that have been violated or neglected. It will promote programs to establish systems of continuing education for judges and retain those that focus on human rights training for employees of the court system, to foster familiarity with and application of inter-American case law and doctrine at the national level. It will also strengthen government institutions for the promotion and protection of rights and freedoms, especially for the offices of the Ombudsman and human rights prosecutors.

In the same way, it will advise nongovernmental organizations, building their capacity to monitor the workings of the system for the administration of justice and government institutions for the protection and defense of human rights. It will make every effort to ensure that excluded groups and the poor have more and better instruments at their disposal for obtaining justice.

The work in this area will be greatly enhanced if the bodies of the inter-American human rights system acknowledge access to justice as an autonomous, verifiable right, and if projects for judicial reform include this issue.

Finally, it is essential to continue the fight against impunity and help justice systems meet the challenges posed by peace and reconciliation programs and by processes of transition to democracy.

Security means that all people, without discrimination, may enjoy their rights and freedoms without unwarranted interference by other individuals or government parties; that their dignity will not be threatened by external factors; and that they can live in the certainty that social conditions exist to favor their full, timely development as human beings.

The IIHR will support actions to counter the public sense of vulnerability and to study new approaches for preventing situations of insecurity and the commission of crime and for dealing with common crime and organized crime in an atmosphere of full respect for human rights. The IIHR can never countenance the violation of fundamental rights under the pretext of taking action against anyone who commits or may commit crimes undermining citizen security. Accordingly, the IIHR will offer human rights training for the armed forces, the police and other State security agencies; it will continue to provide technical assistance to legal defense organizations and to litigants; and it will discourage police responses that focus exclusively on petty crimes, nearly always committed by the poor. In all cases, it will promote respect for victims' rights and due process for all suspects, detainees and prisoners.

The Institute will retain its present emphasis on creating opportunities for people to gather and discuss security doctrines and their intrinsic relationship to human rights and democracy. All such discussions must naturally warn against any attempt to manipulate security concerns by formulating authoritarian initiatives that would undermine the effectiveness of human rights or set undue limits on democratic participation, particularly now that such tendencies have gathered new force under threats of global terrorism. It is equally important to examine relationships between insecurity and impunity and the ways in which security is affected by social exclusion, poverty and the inability of certain groups to enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights.

Political participation means that all people without exception have the real possibility to practice, whether individually or collectively, all the activities associated with their right to choose a

system of government, elect political representatives, be elected and serve as political representatives, take part in setting public rules and policies and monitor the exercise of public duties assigned to political representatives.

The IIHR finds that the effective exercise of human rights has a close, indissoluble relationship with sound democracy and an environment of political participation that extends to traditionally excluded groups. The IIHR defends the intrinsic value of representative democracy and, at the same time, advocates the design and implementation of more and better mechanisms of participation by which democracy can be strengthened.

Accordingly, it will continue working to ensure that electoral boards and their organized networks become more autonomous. It will lend them specialized technical assistance, paying particular attention to their new needs and demands to further the professional development of their staff and modernize their electoral infrastructure (especially with respect to the civil registry, voter rolls and identification documents).

The Institute will also seek greater citizen participation through programs for education in democracy and through civic campaigns to inform voters and encourage them to vote. It will work actively to improve the territorial distribution of politics by bringing the seat of power closer to citizens and helping political parties become more democratic themselves. It will also seek more equitable access to the media and to systems for financing political parties and electoral campaigns. When necessary, it will provide opportunities for communication among electoral boards, political parties, legislative bodies, and social organizations. It will place special emphasis on making political systems more inclusive of women, indigenous groups, people of African descent and the disabled, and on strengthening the exercise of their citizenship. It will support initiatives that these organizations themselves undertake for this purpose.

One clear challenge will be to support effective mechanisms for fighting corruption. Better systems are also needed for political oversight and for the administrative and disciplinary evaluation of the exercise of public duties.

Human rights education means that all individuals, regardless of sex, national or ethnic origin or economic, social and cultural conditions, have a real opportunity to receive systematic, broad-based, high-quality education that will help them understand their human rights, their responsibilities and the national and international systems for human rights protection; to respect and protect the human rights of others; to respect differences and value diversity; to understand the interrelationships among human rights, the rule of law and life in democracy; and in their daily interactions to practice values, attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with human rights.

The IIHR understands that human rights education is one facet of the right to education and an essential prerequisite for the effective exercise of all human rights.

The IIHR also believes that human rights education, understood comprehensively to include academic, political and day-to-day expressions, is a vital tool to bring about change in the abilities,

attitudes and behaviors of government workers, party leaders and the leaders of other organizations of society. If such changes take place, it will become possible to develop and strengthen inclusive, transparent political systems, establish good governance and reduce and even eliminate social exclusion. Unquestionably, human rights education is an incomparable tool for groups that have traditionally suffered discrimination, especially women, children, senior citizens, indigenous peoples, people of African descent, persons with disabilities and the poor, giving them access to their full panoply of rights and helping them organize to promote and protect their rights.

Over the medium term, the Institute hopes to expand the volume and coverage of research on current social problems and the development of curricular content and appropriate teaching methods for human rights education. It will work toward a school curriculum that incorporates or deepens its coverage of this field and will encourage the design and production of teaching materials. It will seek specialized training for those in a position to spread human rights education and will explore ways for educators and educational organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean to have an electronic center of teaching resources on human rights education and to be able to exchange their know-how and experiences across the region.

One of the most daunting challenges for the Institute is the need to design and conduct programs that will counteract social exclusion and poverty and enhance the effective exercise of **economic, social and cultural rights** in Latin America and the Caribbean. Admittedly, the Institute must approach this challenge while safeguarding its specificity and without losing sight of its true role. The IIHR is not an anti-poverty program nor a development agency but, in the strictest sense, a human rights institute.

It is important to remember that the IIHR began as a pioneering venture to grapple with the challenges of human development from the perspective of human rights, and at no time has it neglected this concern. Indeed, it has participated actively in studies on the concept of “human security” and it has reached into such diverse spheres of life in society as nutrition and housing. Little progress has yet been made, given the magnitude of all that remains to be done. One still-unmet challenge, for example, has to do with making these rights enforceable, which presupposes the progressive development of State obligations. The task facing the IIHR is to encourage the international human rights system and, more critically, with the inter-American system, to explore ways to study these rights so that they receive a hearing within national structures for the administration of justice. One useful approach to meeting this challenge is to work closely with the associations of Ombudsman offices and human rights prosecutors and with the different organizations of civil society.

Another challenge is to develop irrefutable evidence of the binding relationship between socially excluded groups and poverty. It should be no surprise that the poorest are also the most excluded. This is why it is essential to strengthen organizations of children, senior citizens, women, indigenous peoples, people of African descent and persons with disabilities—usually the poorest and most socially excluded groups—to recognize their rights and to offer education in the exercise of these rights. The IIHR should also look into the possibility of developing progress indicators in economic, social and cultural rights as a supplement to the specific progress indicators published by the UNDP, lending new insight from the perspective of human rights. Another vehicle for action would be to explore already existing openings

to work with government institutions and political parties. The main consideration is that successful actions to reduce poverty and increase social inclusion will in fact ensure a healthy future for democracy in this hemisphere.

When it selected these groups of rights as the primary focus for its work, the IIHR decided that it should continue to address all of them in terms of three **cross-cutting perspectives**: gender equality, recognition and preservation of ethnic diversity, and opening channels for society to participate and to interact with the State.

By working with specific cross-cutting perspectives, the Institute ensures sure that its work responds to the real problems, interests and lives of the members of the groups it targets and makes a meaningful contribution to greater equality, to fighting discrimination, to encouraging more participation by society, and to opening dialogue with State institutions. this position should be reflected in all project selection and implementation, the definition and oversight of project content, the adaptation of support materials, the choice of beneficiaries and counterparts, and the way services are provided.

Finally, the IIHR prefers to design and run its projects using a geopolitical approach that takes a two-pronged perspective: aggregation and concentration in each country, and at the same time, sensitivity to lines of action or approaches of regional or inter-American relevance. Institute activities in a country begin with a strategic, comprehensive view of that country's problems, needs and conditions so as to contribute more effectively to finding solutions. The IIHR has discovered the value of selecting pilot countries where it can develop this integrated approach, so that successes can now be replicated.⁸ A parallel concern is to extract lessons from the work in individual countries that can be held up for comparison both regionally and at the inter-American level, so that if similar factors and patterns are found, common responses can be shaped. The IIHR knows that national problems require national solutions; but it also seeks ways to draw the greatest possible benefit from its character as an inter-American institution and from the fact that it works in most of the countries of the region. Despite its hemispheric reach, the Institute recognizes that it still needs to project more of its attention to the Caribbean, working especially with electoral boards, Ombudsman offices and non-governmental organizations.

8 An early experience with integrated action was undertaken in Guatemala starting in 1996; since 2000, similar pilot initiatives have been taken in Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

INSTRUMENTS OF ACTION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The process of designing and implementing responses casts light on global similarities and trends; however, it is important not to overlook differences in the big picture for democracy and human rights or to ignore the unique challenges in each country of Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the tasks facing the IIHR is to identify general problems as well as those that are specific to each group, each country and the region. This is the only way to frame effective, efficient responses.

The IIHR pursues its objectives through action along four main lines:

- 1) applied research,
- 2) intensive use of networks and alliances,
- 3) use of new information technologies, and
- 4) the Interdisciplinary Course on Human Rights and activities of the Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL).

The challenge of framing a response to each and every one of the needs of democracy and human rights in the hemisphere is fraught with difficulty, but the attempt must never be abandoned. The Institute takes pride in its groundbreaking work and in its ability to broach new issues and challenges. The IIHR is determined to make a contribution by promoting applied research that draws on the synergy between research topics and knowledge acquired over the years. Such research produces recommendations for international cooperation agencies, government institutions, and organizations of civil society, to introduce any necessary changes in legal provisions and to guide national policies and projects on human rights and democracy. The Institute should also favor research projects that enrich human rights education; this in turn will broaden access to rights and foster social coordination and political participation, particularly for those groups that are traditionally subject to discrimination. Most important, this work will lead to inclusive and transparent political systems and good government.

A particularly innovative project in this field is conducting **applied research to establish progress indicators** on human rights and democracy. The idea is to obtain continuous, systematic, reliable information on the status of human rights and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, not by counting violations committed, but rather by measuring specific progress or setbacks for each right. The resulting comprehensive map should serve as a primary source of information on needs in the field of human rights and democracy in the region and in each individual country, and it should provide guidance for institutional action. The project is still in its initial phase, working in six pilot countries to define indicators for the sets of rights selected by the IIHR as a top priority. Once the instruments have

been tested, the work will expand into other countries of the region and its scope will broaden to include other sets of rights, including some or all of the economic, social and cultural rights.

The research on progress indicators should prove useful not only in setting a course for the work of the IIHR, but also for guiding international cooperation agencies, government institutions and civil society organizations so they can focus their efforts more accurately and effectively on those points where needs are most critical and solutions hold the highest priority. If the information in the progress indicators is used correctly and updated regularly, it can guide the dialogue over on-going as well as short-term needs.

The system of indicators may also be useful as part of a program for early warning on threats to or weaknesses of the democratic regime. One of the uses of such an early warning system, which is still on the drawing board, would be for missions of analysis and observation of elections.

As a second tool for action, the Institute will **create, strengthen and make intensive use of networks and alliances**. The IIHR has a long history of fostering and using these mechanisms, partly because of its nature as an inter-American institution, and partly as a consequence of its continuous exploration of opportunities for interaction among the States and the different organizations of civil society.

Under the new strategy, networks will become a basic working tool rather than merely a circumstantial recourse, and they will become a regular feature of current and future work. The Institute understands that networks can serve as a means to multiply and intensify the impact of its work, replicate national experiences across the region, and encourage horizontal cooperation among members of the networks.

Along these lines, the IIHR uses networks and alliances to strengthen electoral boards, buttress the system for the administration of justice, and solidify institutions for the protection of human rights. It also turns to networks to promote participation by civil society and by groups, such as women, indigenous peoples and those of African descent, that in the past have been discriminated against and excluded. Social harmony has been and will continue to be one of the on-going concerns of the IIHR.

The IIHR intends to strengthen its role as technical secretariat for the associations of electoral bodies around the hemisphere (under the Quito and Tikal Protocols) and the associations for the offices of the Ombudsman and human rights prosecutors (Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation and Central American Council of Human Rights Ombudsmen).

Likewise, it will expand its work in human rights promotion and education and for disseminating specialized doctrine through its course participants, university networks, and networks specializing in certain rights or specific topics.

The Institute has succeeded in building and coordinating, widely and effectively, networks and alliances. It has pursued this goal during the course of its many activities preparatory to world

conferences on human rights, women and racial discrimination, and for regional initiatives such as the Inter-American Democratic Charter for and the strengthening of the inter-American system for human rights protection. It must continue in this direction if it is to function effectively in a globalized world, integrate its work and see its actions attain regional coverage.

A third working tool is the **use of information technologies and other new methods** for disseminating information and knowledge regarding human rights and democracy. The IIHR has modernized its equipment and designed a number of electronic tools for institutional management. It has also begun using information technology to achieve fast, easy communication, disseminate information on human rights and democracy massively, and host specialized discussions in a number of fields. It has extended the reach and frequency of its activities for human rights education. If it can coordinate the use of new technologies effectively with its work to create and strengthen networks and alliances, it will see immeasurable results in terms of multiplication and coverage.

One of its new tasks is to keep its Web site up-to-date and modern. Its goal is to provide the general public with access to the impressive collection of information it holds in the Documentation Center and in the Joint Library of the Institute and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. It also offers its own publications and materials, useful for personal study and for training in workshops, courses and conferences.

The Institute wants to maximize the use of its Web site. It will offer specialized sections on particular issues, containing information and working tools for organizations and individuals involved with the rights of indigenous peoples and those of African descent; women; political and electoral rights; offices of the human rights Ombudsman; and human rights training. On its Web site, it will make available to the public a virtual human rights classroom with an on-line training module. It also runs a discussion list on human rights education, known as educa-dh, and manages several mailing lists to encourage the use of networks and facilitate the Institute's own work. To keep interested organizations in touch with rapporteurs of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations system, it operates a virtual bulletin board for sharing information, called *Conectando*.

The IIHR has set itself the challenge of staying current. It constantly asks how it can best use the latest information technologies and systems to extend its work and become more effective in promotion, education and technical assistance for human rights and democracy. Finally, its uppermost concern is the pressing need to find mechanisms that will keep these resources within reach of everyone, including the poorest.

The **Interdisciplinary Course on Human Rights** and the activities of the **Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance (CAPEL)**,⁹ two of the Institute's banner programs, continue to be extremely effective working tools. Starting in 2000, the objectives and methods of these programs were overhauled, making them more consistent with the strategic goals of the IIHR. These activities have demonstrated

9 The Interdisciplinary Course has completed an uninterrupted series of 20 annual courses; CAPEL was created in 1983 as a specialized branch of the IIHR.

their ability to add value to the services they provide, especially at a time when many other entities are offering services similar to those of the Institute.

The last three annual editions of the Interdisciplinary Course (18, 19 and 20) introduced fundamental changes. Course content and selection of speakers and participants emphasized the core themes of the Institute strategy and incorporated the cross-cutting working perspectives. But this was only the beginning. The Course itself is now the culmination of a lengthy training process that begins long before and finishes far after the activity itself. It is now part of a broad process, a point where resources come together, building on advance work and projecting into the future. The Course is a synthesis of many years' accumulation of teaching and methodological experiences: fostering alliances and networks, identification of experts, technological modernization and the push for innovative systems of research, education and action. In its other regional training activities, the Institute is drawing on the many lessons it has learned from this repositioning of the Interdisciplinary Course.

CAPEL was born of the Institute's conviction that close attention should be given to the necessary linkages between human rights and democracy and to the critical role of electoral processes for the existence of democratic regimes. It recently underwent assessment through an exhaustive, rigorous examination. The evaluation, conducted with the participation of experts in democracy and elections, representatives of donor agencies and members of electoral bodies of elections in the region, highlighted a number of distinctive characteristics of this program: its Latin American origin, its inter-American scope, its pluralistic, non-party character, and its history of successful relations of cooperation and technical assistance with electoral bodies.

Moving beyond this role, the program today must find ways to deepen its work with political parties, making them more democratic and strengthening them as mechanisms of social representation. CAPEL also faces the challenge of dovetailing its work with that of other organizations in society, especially those that represent women, indigenous peoples, those of African descent and persons with disabilities.

Finally, the Center for Electoral Promotion and Assistance needs to explore possible activities to target civic education for life in democracy. It should look into holding voter information campaigns and get-out-the-vote drives with the active, coordinated participation of electoral boards and other organizations of society..

STRUCTURAL RECONFIGURATION

Reconfiguration is never a finished process, but rather a reengineering of systems. Each strategic choice should be reflected in an institutional architecture by which that choice can be accomplished effectively and efficiently. The purpose of reconfiguration is to tailor the internal structure of the IIHR to its strategic decisions and to optimize the use of resources.

The IIHR decided in its previous three-year proposal to modify its institutional structure by establishing three operating departments responsible for project implementation, and four support units to provide services to the projects. This structure is now up and running.

The three operating departments are CAPEL, Public Institutions, and Entities of Civil Society. The support units are Administration and Finances, Applied Research, Information and Publications, and Education. The Office of the Executive Director is responsible for management and institutional tasks.

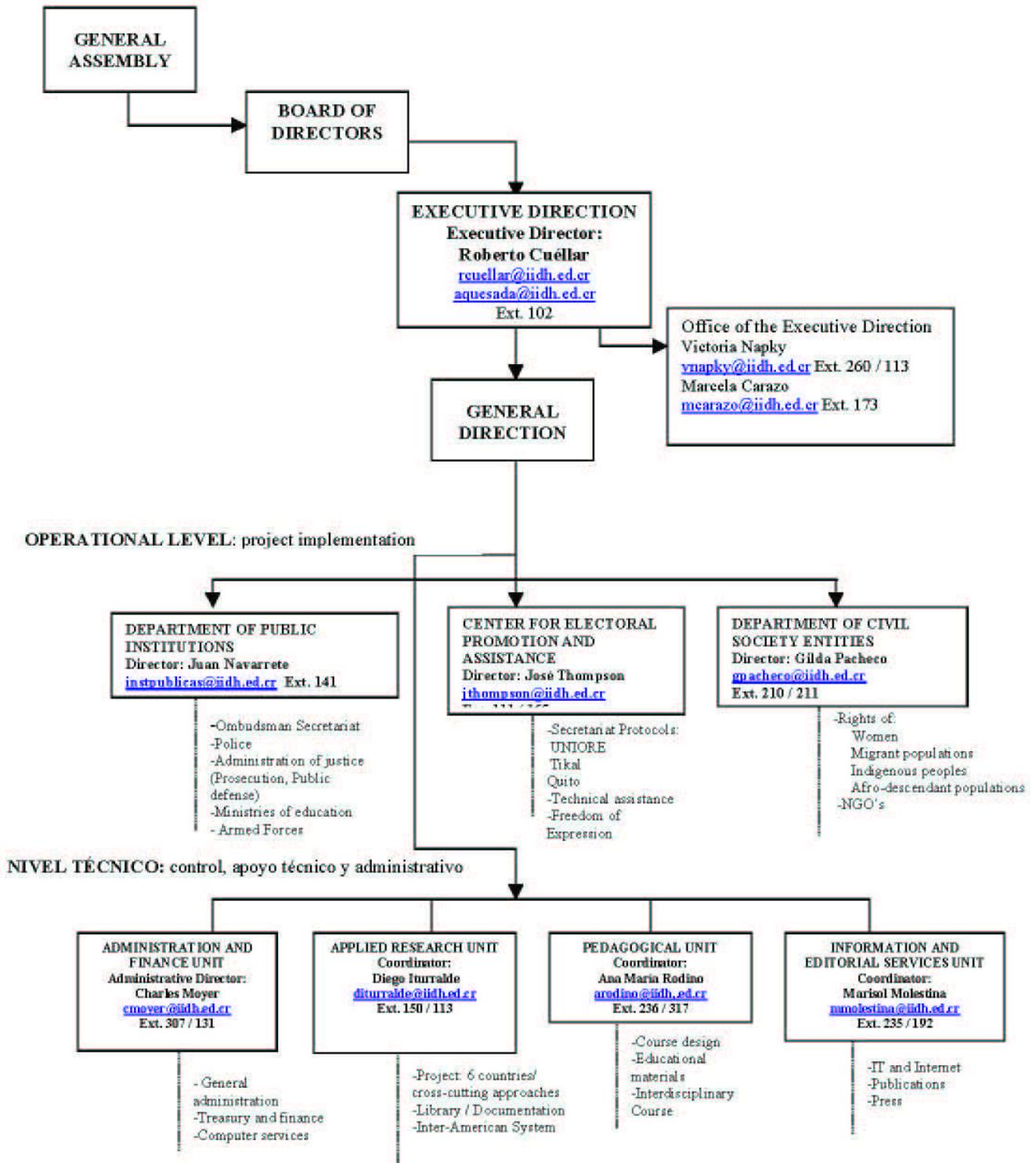
This institutional reconfiguration was envisaged as a means to streamline program management of projects on the basis of the high-priority core themes and cross-cutting perspectives. It is also geared toward improving coordination of project implementation, conscious of the need for geopolitical targeting.

It is still too early to know whether the reorganization has yielded all the fruits it promised. Even so, the structure is already being fine-tuned to keep institutional efforts cohesive, make sure project design and implementation focus on the high-priority core themes, and consistently include the perspectives of gender equality, recognition and preservation of ethnic diversity, and creation of opportunities for participation by society and for interaction with the State. This process has encountered its share of difficulties because we come from an institutional culture of compartmentalization and because the transition has been very intense.

The current structure will be revised again after a new evaluation of institutional development and the defining of the type of structure that will best fit the new strategic plan. The most important consideration for now is that the IIHR must avoid adhering too closely to any rigid, immutable scheme. Above all, it must remain agile and dynamic, ready at any time to respond effectively to whatever strategic options are selected. A pliable structure will be one of the keys to future success of institutional work and will provide an incalculable comparative advantage. The IIHR must be able to keep up with a fast-changing world, a constantly shifting environment that the Institute itself is helping to transform.

IIHR: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

August, 2002



THE INSTITUTE'S STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

The IIHR should devote particular consideration to its institutional strengths and challenges as it tackles its most immediate task: to design a smoothly functioning strategic plan that will effectively and efficiently translate the ideas and concepts contained in this framework through diverse scenarios, work programs, budgets and timetables.

With an effective, creative strategic plan, the IIHR will be equipped to respond well to three of its most acute challenges: bringing about smoother regional coordination; offering more efficient, higher quality services, and seizing the advantages of new technologies for information and communication.

Over these 22 years, the IIHR has played a key role in the struggle for the comprehensive, effective exercise of human rights and democracy. Founded in 1980, when the region was rife with military dictatorships, the Institute worked on two broad fronts: first, concerned that the process of filing human rights complaints and taking action in this field should be more efficient, it offered programs of training and technical assistance for nongovernmental organizations and other entities of civil society; second, it fostered a return to democracy and free, regular elections. In all this, the IIHR relied on resources available through international cooperation. From the beginning, the Institute, conscious of its interdisciplinary nature and its ability to cover the entire inter-American sphere, had articulated what have become its basic lines of action: promotion, education and technical assistance in human rights and democracy, inter-American action, and the creation of opportunities for interaction among different sectors.

With the advent of democracy, the IIHR began offering technical assistance to electoral bodies to guarantee elections that were technically irreproachable, and supporting efforts by society to achieve national reconciliation without sacrificing the rights to truth and justice. It began to explore other fields and issues that required more in-depth attention: human exodus in the region and displacement of populations; recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples; the fight for equality for women; correctional and prison systems and their impact on citizen rights and freedoms; the rights of persons with disabilities; legal aspects of the environment and human development and their interaction with human rights, and the challenges of citizen security and its impact on fundamental rights and freedoms. The Institute took a pioneering role, tackling all these issues creatively and imaginatively.

The IIHR understood early on that the survival of new democracies had to begin with the strengthening of government institutions. It launched the first human rights training programs for military and police forces and fostered the creation of Ombudsman offices. It held ambitious training

programs for judicial staff of systems for the administration of justice so constitutionally recognized rights would become a legal reality, and so that local courts would begin to apply international human rights treaties and standards of interpretation emerging from international systems for protection and, most particularly, from the work of the Inter-American Court and Commission of Human Rights. Along the same lines, the IIHR was creating specialized doctrine on human rights, elections and democracy.

With the passage of time, the IIHR made the most of its position as an academic institution with an inter-American scope. It has covered the length and breadth of the hemisphere working with an exceedingly broad range of social sectors and government institutions. It has trained thousands of multiplier agents in human rights theory and has touched the lives of tens of thousands more through the more than one hundred books, journals, brochures and videos it has published. The bibliographic collections in the Documentation Center and the Joint Library of the Institute and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the best of its kind in Latin America, are open for consultation by anyone who needs specific information or specialized doctrine on this theme.

Unquestionably, many of the achievements that have been made in Latin America and the Caribbean over the years in the field of human rights and democracy have rested on the work of the IIHR. The Institute deserves to take pride in its hard-won reputation as one of the most prestigious and renowned institutions in the region in the fields of human rights and democracy.

Nonetheless, it must never take for granted the credibility and fame it has earned. In the future, the Institute must maintain the comparative advantages that its beneficiaries, counterparts and donors ascribe to it:

- Its lengthy experience and the prestige it has earned over the years; as a result, the IIHR is now known throughout the hemisphere as an institution with an excellent reputation whose services are in demand by governments, public institutions, nongovernmental organizations and other entities of society.
- Its ability to mesh local and regional processes, build alliances and support networks, and serve as common ground and a place where organizations of society can come together with State institutions and sometimes with international agencies of cooperation.
- Its inter-American nature, its Latin American origin and the regional scope of its activities.
- Its interdisciplinary, comprehensive approach to human rights and to the link between human rights and democracy.
- Its teaching materials and the excellence and variety of its educational services.
- Its ability to produce information, specialized doctrine and methodological tools on promotion and education for human rights and democracy.

- Its connection to the inter-American human rights system.
- The systems it has developed for transparent administrative and financial management and its proven accountability, which qualify it for oversight of projects funded by international assistance agencies.

Despite these undeniable advantages, the Institute still faces many challenges:

- Keep current and preserve its leadership in the fields of human rights and democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, while at the same time continuously renewing itself.
- Protect and bolster its credibility in the midst of relentlessly changing conditions in the region.
- Work in harmony and close association with other national and international entities that now offer services in the same fields as the IIHR, offering its experience and a forum where these other efforts can come together.
- Optimize its fund-raising efforts.
- Strengthen its identification and relationship with the Inter-American Court and Commission on Human Rights.
- Bring about greater coordination of effort in the sub-regions and at the inter-American level and, at the same time, encourage more effective national and local responses.
- Strengthen and broaden existing alliances and networks.
- Coordinate its work with the Summits of the Americas process and other international and regional efforts.
- Remain up-to-date with communication and information systems and make intensive use of new technologies.
- Preserve its dynamic, flexible character and constantly tailor its policies, priorities, lines of action and structure to the changing conditions of human rights and democracy in the region.