



# IRPF: Developing Local Capacity Since 1992

CASE STUDY FACT SHEET



Photo: International Real Property Foundation

## IRPF AT-A-GLANCE

From its founding more than 22 years ago, the **International Real Property Foundation (IRPF)**, originally named the Eastern European Real Property Foundation or EERPF, has focused on **local capacity development** in real property markets around the world.

IRPF has facilitated the creation of successful, sustainable member-owned associations in more than **20 countries**. These member-owned associations foster professionalism and transparency in real estate brokerage, property appraisal, and property management.

Through its assessment process and tailored follow-up activities, IRPF has helped to strengthen capacity in at least **85 member-owned associations** providing services to **200,000** real estate professionals.

*The International Real Property Foundation (IRPF) was founded on the belief that “a strong real estate sector [is] a powerful force to lift an emerging economy, improve living standards and alleviate poverty.” Acting on this belief, IRPF partners with real estate associations around the world to implement a systematic approach to strengthening the local marketplace. IRPF assesses, trains, and mentors, all the while guiding associations to act on their own behalf. Over time this results in mature, locally-led real estate markets that spur economic growth.*

## BACKGROUND

From its founding more than 22 years ago, IRPF has focused on local capacity development (LCD) in real property markets around the world. IRPF's earliest work was with Russia and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. While continuing to work in Eastern and Central Europe, over the years IRPF has facilitated member-owned associations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The most recent IRPF programs have been in Central Europe (Bosnia, Georgia), Africa (Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda), and India.

With development donor the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) moving to increase its use of local systems, there is a corresponding need for cost-effective, field-tested approaches for LCD. In USAID economic programming for inclusive growth, success may depend on the ability to facilitate effective “horizontal linkages” between firms performing similar roles in the value chain.

Over the years, IRPF has learned some important lessons about developing local capacity in voluntary associations and these lessons, incorporated into IRPF's systematic approach to LCD, are cross-cultural in nature and broadly applicable to many types of member-owned associations within market systems.

## IMPACT

IRPF's mission is to "assist in the creation of free, efficient, transparent and equitable real estate markets anchored to private property rights; to help develop civil society by establishing an ethical and trained real estate profession committed to protection of the public and organized into representative real property associations; and to promote real property ownership as a key element of strong democracies and poverty alleviation." Creating and sustaining local member-owned associations is its core strategy for achieving this mission.



Photo: International Real Property Foundation

A 2009 evaluation of IRPF's program measured its impact against the number of sustainable, self-financing associations created or strengthened by IRPF and providing services to real estate professionals. At the time: **20 associations were created** through the IRPF approach; **85 associations were strengthened**; and **200,000 real estate professionals were benefiting from membership** in an association created or strengthened by IRPF.

## LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

LCD is at the core of IRPF's work. One of the requirements for receiving support from IRPF is that an association must agree to take an on-going interest in and sponsor an educational and training program for members' benefit. The IRPF approach to LCD is innovative in that it requires local ownership from the start. The approach is grounded in a strong and early push toward autonomy and self-sufficiency for the local organization. Local ownership and empowerment are essentially the keys to IRPF's success, since they contribute to both the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of their LCD results.



IRPF follows a well-defined, systematic approach to strengthening associations and developing local capacity. The approach has been successfully replicated with sustainable results in Central Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Four essential components of IRPF's approach to working locally include: conducting assessments; writing detailed, demand-driven agreements; securing commitments from associations; and promoting autonomy and self-sufficiency.

As a Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) member, IRPF offers a well-honed approach to LCD, deep professional experience with real property market systems, and access to its network of qualified volunteers.

## THE VEGA ALLIANCE

The Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) is the world's largest member-directed consortium of nonprofit economic growth organizations that designs and delivers high impact programs, incorporating skilled volunteer professionals into its work with donors, philanthropic institutions, private enterprise, and developing country organizations. VEGA was established as a 501(c)3 organization in 2004 through a United States Agency for International Development's Leader with Associate Award. When it began a decade ago, VEGA was established as a rapid and efficient mechanism that utilized a competitive process to award USAID funding to its member organizations. Now, VEGA continues to champion its model and its alliance members' breadth of expertise to other partners. VEGA supported the research and publication of this case study as part of its commitment to knowledge management and sharing lessons learned among its member organizations and the international development community.



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