

The NIMD approach facilitating interparty dialogue



Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy

Contents

Introduction	4
– NIMD’s identity: a unique selling point	
NIMD’s focus:	5
Putting political organisations centre stage	
Rationale for NIMD’s work:	6
Linking politics and development	
– Development & democracy: a positive match	
NIMD’s approach & guiding principles	7
NIMD’s niche: Inclusive and institutionalised interparty dialogue platforms	8
– Key roles interparty dialogue platforms	8
NIMD: organisation, funding and strategic partners	11
Key successes and lessons learned	12
Footnotes	13
NIMD programme countries	14
Colophon	20

NIMD

Introduction

Seven Dutch political parties founded the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) in 2000 in order to assist political parties in new and developing democracies and to deepen and sustain young political systems.

Since the establishment of its secretariat in 2002, NIMD has supported over 150 political parties and democratic movements in 18 countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and the Caucasus. NIMD engages directly with political parties to strengthen their organisations and bring parties around the table to discuss and agree on national reform agendas. NIMD's programmes are country-owned and tailor-made.

NIMD's identity: a unique selling point

As an organisation founded by seven Dutch political parties, NIMD's multiparty identity in itself has often proved to be an 'eye-opener' for local political leaders.

The NIMD example has been an inspiration for political leaders seeking to work together and engage in constructive political dialogue, especially in countries where the political environment is highly polarised and little trust exists between politicians and political parties. NIMD's multi-party background also provides the legitimacy to work, on an impartial basis, with leaders across the political spectrum in partner countries in politically sensitive reform processes.

NIMD's focus

Putting political organisations centre stage

A functional and effective democracy depends upon accountable leaders who represent the interests of the electorate and articulate these needs and aspirations through policy and action. Traditionally, political parties have taken on this role while, more recently, broad-based social movements have taken a lead role in the call for transformational change processes in Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa.

Political parties and movements are essential because they anchor and deepen democracy and foster domestic accountability. When elected leaders and government institutions are held accountable for decision-making and budget allocations, opportunities for equitable economic and human development increase significantly.

In developing countries, political organisations often struggle to fulfil their democratic roles. Political parties and movements in emerging economies and developing countries are regarded as one of the 'weakest links' in the field of development.¹ They are often poorly organised, lack a solid rootedness in society, and are often disconnected from key national and local development planning and decision making processes.

Despite their critical role in improving responsive and accountable governance, political leaders and parties receive little support, either internationally or locally, and are thus unable to strengthen their internal organisations or enhance their democratic skills and practices.

NIMD was founded in order to take up the challenge of supporting political parties and assisting them in strengthening their democratic roles in society, better influencing national development agendas and effectively controlling the executive.

Rationale for NIMD's work:

Linking politics and development

NIMD's vision is to support multi-party political systems and capacity building for political parties and political groupings to sustain stable, pluralistic democracies. Through its support, NIMD aims to contribute to deepening and sustaining democratic political institutions in young democracies.

The rationale for NIMD's work is that stable, transparent and accountable democratic systems harness peace, security, political stability and respect for human rights and the rule of law and positively influence sustainable economic and human development. The positive relationship between democratic governance and economic and human development is increasingly supported by evidence.²

In democratically governed countries, the voices of citizens count. The shift to democracy, greater transparency, and increased accountability has changed the dynamic for the formation of public policies. Most of today's leaders in countries with whom NIMD works are more responsive to their citizens and are more concerned than their predecessors about a wider range of development issues, as well as broad-based economic growth and poverty reduction.³

Development & democracy: a positive match

The political and economic situation in most NIMD partner countries has changed significantly in the past two decades. Linking multi-party democracy with new economic policies to address the root causes of poverty has produced some remarkable achievements with durable effects.⁴

In Africa, a growing and dynamic group of emerging countries – including Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Malawi – are breaking away from their unfortunate histories of economic decline and political decay.⁵

In Latin America, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador have sustained solid macro-economic policies which led to economic growth and targeting poverty, regardless of changing governments. The next challenge is to secure more inclusive policies and to target inequity.

NIMD's approach & guiding principles

NIMD works with political parties and democratic movements in new and developing democracies to improve political cooperation, primarily through facilitating interparty dialogue, and by working directly with political organisations to strengthen their organisational and policy capacities.

In general, NIMD programmes are built around three main strategies:

- 1 fostering an **interparty dialogue** that addresses issues of national concern;
- 2 **strengthening political parties** to become legitimate, accountable and responsive actors, equipped with dialogue, policy development and communication and outreach skills; and
- 3 supporting **alliances (communities of change) between political and civil society** to create a broad support base for the agenda that emerges out of the dialogue platform.

All NIMD programmes are guided by a set of key principles. These include: **impartiality** (a non-partisan approach), **inclusiveness** (working with all parliamentary political parties), **equality** (in principle, all parliamentary parties are represented) **ownership** (local partners set the agenda), **partnership** (collaboration with a broad spectrum of local and international organisations and actors), **flexibility and context specificity** (best fit approach⁶: taking account of the unique and complex political environments and power and incentive structures within which NIMD partners operate) and **long term commitment** (transformational change processes require long term support).

NIMD's niche:

Inclusive and institutionalised interparty dialogue platforms

Locally owned and inclusive interparty dialogue platforms that bring together (usually all) parliamentary parties are the foundation upon which NIMD programmes are constructed. These platforms have generally become known as Centres for Multiparty Democracy (CMDs), although several countries use different names.

These novel platforms—set up and owned by the leadership of all parliamentary political parties across the political spectrum—facilitate consensus-oriented interparty debate between governing and opposition parties on concrete political reform challenges. The NIMD-supported platforms operate on the basis of equality and inclusiveness. This cooperation has resulted in higher levels of trust and confidence between participating parties, and has opened up possibilities for political and policy reform (see section on successes below).

The involvement of the political leadership in an equal and inclusive manner helps parties to pre-empt political conflicts that might otherwise spill over into violence. Furthermore, it enables parties to find shared positions on such issues as constitutional reforms; reviews of electoral systems; improvements in the management of elections; increased levels of participation by women and young people in the political process; and legislation on political parties (including governance, accountability and public funding laws).

Key roles interparty dialogue platforms

The NIMD-supported dialogue platforms take on a variety of different roles. The dialogue platforms:

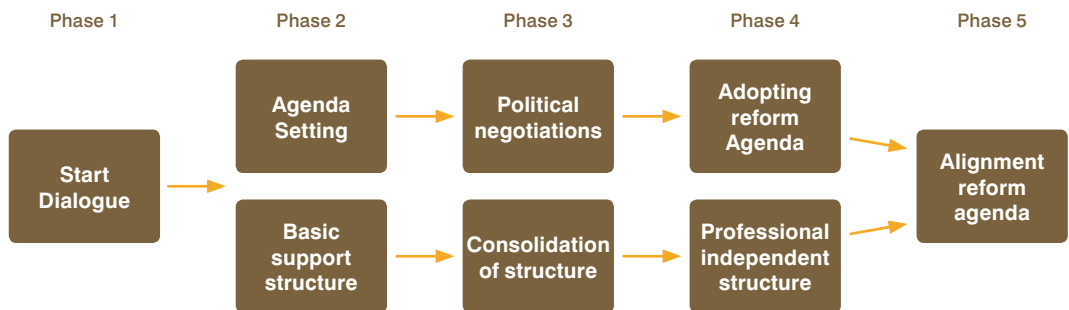
- Provide a safe meeting space where political parties can meet informally to get to know each other as competitive colleagues (not enemies).
 - Allow parties to let off steam and in doing so, serve as a mitigating and depolarisation mechanism and a means to advocate for peaceful co-existence.
 - Gradually build up (interpersonal and interparty) levels of trust as a first step towards a more accommodating and reconciliatory political culture.
 - Organise parties around a shared reform agenda and open up possibilities for dialogue between the ruling and opposition parties (often for the first time) on critical political and policy reform issues.
 - Act as knowledge and information, political education and capacity building centres for political parties.
 - Build bridges between political and civil society and the private sector around a shared agenda.
-

Constructive debate on critical reforms is particularly difficult in a highly informal political system with a dominant party structure. Because the Parliament can not always play its role effectively within these systems, there is merit in investing in an (informal) interparty dialogue process out of the parliamentary limelight. In facilitating dialogue processes, NIMD takes a cautious approach, with limited expectations in the short to medium term. Furthermore, NIMD ensures that the interparty dialogue is organised in a non-confrontational and non-partisan manner and facilitated by a neutral and honest broker around non-contentious issues in the first phase of the dialogue.

Explicit steps are taken to institutionalise the different interparty dialogue platforms, and to secure ownership and sustainability. This is not an easy process, and does not always follow the logical sequencing of the various steps of the dialogue process presented in figure 1 below. A particular dialogue process may clash with currently polarised local relations and predatory practices on the part of politicians and political parties. Balancing the attention paid to the institutionalisation processes of these fora while at the same time ensuring a credible political reform agenda has proven to be demanding. Once functional, however, rates of return can be impressive (see section below on successes).

figure 1

Facilitating an Interparty Dialogue

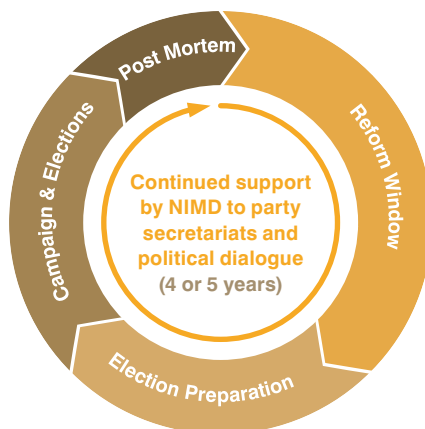


As the institutionalisation of the interparty dialogues progresses and partner institutions mature, the balance gradually shifts towards brokering the political reform agendas and linking these agendas to national development processes and parliamentary calendars. NIMD's experience has demonstrated that the window of opportunity for political reforms in its programme countries is often limited to the timeframe between the end of elections and the beginning of the next pre-campaign period. NIMD therefore increasingly aligns its programme activities to the different phases of the electoral cycle to ensure maximum impact. See figure below.

In light of its unique approach and its strategic networks at the highest political levels, NIMD and its partners can play a critical role in further brokering strategic partnerships between traditional development actors and political actors, both locally and internationally. This helps to ensure that both areas of work are better aligned in practice, generating maximum impact and results.

figure 2

National electoral cycle



NIMD

organisation, funding and strategic partners

NIMD operates from its office in The Hague and is headed by an Executive Director with a small team of around 20 professionals and support staff. The Executive Director is responsible for the management and strategic development of the organisation and reports to the Supervisory Board, which consists of a number of independent members. An Advisory Council, consisting of representatives of the Dutch founding political parties, provides strategic advice on key policy issues.

NIMD operates with an annual budget of around €10 million and is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations, International IDEA, the governments of the United Kingdom, Denmark, Belgium and Canada, and the Deepening Democracy Programme multi-donor fund in Uganda.

To improve the quality and impact of its programmes and activities, NIMD has also entered into a strategic partnership with International IDEA and the Association of Europeans Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA). NIMD will continue to explore further possibilities for strategic and programmatic partnerships with other like-minded organisations, both in the Netherlands and internationally.

Key successes and lessons learned

Independent evaluations have confirmed that NIMD's unique approach has generated tangible results.⁷ According to these reports, the key explanatory factors for NIMD's positive track record are:

- 1 Its demand-driven and risk-taking approach;
 - 2 The guiding principles of ownership, flexibility, inclusiveness and long term engagement; and
 - 3 Its unique approach that allows space for local actors to drive and manage the processes of change and allows for the development of homegrown agendas in programme countries.
- Improvement of the organisational capacities, policy and campaign formulating skills and dialogue skills of political party staff and leadership in the majority of NIMD partner countries.
 - Support for local and international multi-actor networks, resulting in local alliances around reform agendas and increased local resource mobilization.
 - Political education programmes established in seven partner countries, contributing to new generations of well-trained young political practitioners.

Some of these successes include:

- NIMD-supported dialogue fora established and operational in fourteen partner countries, resulting in enhanced trust and emerging mutual cooperation between political leaders and political parties.
- Stronger links between political parties and key democratic institutions, including electoral commissions and parliamentary committees.
- Improved legislation governing political parties in Kenya, Guatemala, Tanzania and Ghana.
- Development and alignment of democratic reform agendas translated by the dialogue platforms into national policy and budget processes, for instance in Ghana and Guatemala.

Part of NIMD's approach is its willingness to take risks and invest in fragile processes with uncertain outcomes. Not all of its investments come to full fruition. In a small number of cases the NIMD-facilitated interparty dialogue process has been terminated prematurely.

Footnotes

¹ Carothers, T. (2006), *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC .

² Collier, P. (2007), *The Bottom Billion, Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*; van Lieshout, P, Went, R. and Kremer, P. (2010), *Less Pretention More Ambition*, Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR, Scientific Council for Government Policy); Halperin, M. H, Siegle, J. T. and Weinstein, M. M. (2005), *The democracy advantage: how democracies promote prosperity and peace*.

³ See Latinobarómetro and Afrobarometer surveys: www.latinobarometro.org and www.afrobarometer.org

⁴ Radelet, S. (2010), *Emerging Africa*, Centre for Global Development, Washington.



⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Centre for the Future State (2010), *An upside down view of governance*, (Institute of Development Studies).

⁷ Slot, H, de Lange, P, Feddes, R. and Kamphuis, E. (2010), *Evaluation of Dutch Support to Capacity Development: The case of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague); and Wild, L. and Hudson, A. (2009), *UK support for Political Parties: A Stock-take* (Overseas Development Institute, United Kingdom).

NIMD programme countries



-  Current NIMD programmes
-  At this moment NIMD is starting up programmes in Benin, South Sudan, Jordan, Libya, El Salvador, Moldova and Myanmar



NIMD

programme countries

Africa

Burundi

In Burundi, NIMD has worked with its partner organisation, the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP), since 2008. The programme aims to positively influence the consolidation of peace in Burundi by fostering increased levels of trust between political actors. This is done mainly through relationship building, political dialogue and the promotion and facilitation of multiparty thematic discussion, on subjects of national interest, aimed at developing the policy base of political parties. Further, NIMD contributes to the setting-up of local level multiparty networks in the ten most politically divided provinces in Burundi, through a Schools for Democracy Programme in which politically engaged citizens are trained in basic human rights and leadership skills.

Ghana

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) has implemented NIMD's political party programme in Ghana since 2002. The interparty dialogue facilitated by the IEA is highly pro-active and has generated a number of important achievements since its establishment, including the development of the Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP), launched in 2008; the preparation of the Presidential Transition Bill, recently adopted in Parliament; and the submission of a common position on constitutional amendments to the Constitutional Reform Commission. In addition to cross party activities, all four parliamentary political parties receive bilateral support for the strengthening of their programmatic and policy development capacities.

Kenya

Since 2004, NIMD has worked in Kenya through the Centre for Multiparty Democracy Kenya (CMD-K). In the aftermath of the troubled 2007 elections, CMD-K played a constructive role in fostering a multi-actor dialogue, bringing together political and civil society around a democratic reform agenda and building consensus for the necessary constitutional reform. Important components of the programme include its focus on dialogue and its emphasis on decreasing tension to avoid electoral violence, as well as its facilitation of interparty cooperation on the implementation of the new Constitution and the formulation of new legislation on political party registration, governance and public funding. CMD-K's work is carried out in close cooperation with civil society groups on thematic issues.

Malawi

NIMD has been active in Malawi since 2002. In 2005, with support from NIMD, the parliamentary parties established an inter-party dialogue platform, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-M). Through CMD-M the parliamentary parties develop joint initiatives to improve the political system, organise political education programmes and develop their party programmes and manifestoes. The interparty dialogue meetings have helped facilitate a broader consensus between the ruling party and opposition parties on the necessary electoral reforms for the planned tripartite elections in May 2014. Furthermore the platform plays an important role in establishing relations between the parties, the Electoral Commission and other democratic stakeholders, and preparing the parties for their role in the elections.

Mali

NIMD has been active in Mali since 2003. Its partner in Mali is the Centre pour le Dialogue Inter-Partis et la Démocratie (CMDID), established in 2008. CMDID facilitates interparty dialogue between the Malian political parties on democratic reform processes, electoral laws and regulations. The political parties' joint view is regularly put forward in communiqués issued at the conclusion of dialogue workshops and interparty consultations, at both the national and regional levels. In the aftermath of the 22 March 2012 coup, CMDID played an important role by bringing parties together to discuss and agree on a united response to the crisis. The largest parties and the remaining parliamentary groups receive bilateral support to improve their basic secretariat functions, train party cadres and improve the policy orientation of party manifestos. Within the CMDID programme, special attention is given to women and youth advocacy groups.

Mozambique

Since 2000, the NIMD programme in Mozambique has supported political party development and initiatives that contribute to the depolarisation of the political dynamics. The NIMD Country Office in Maputo facilitates interparty dialogue on the constitutional reform process and electoral law reform. The dialogue sessions on reform issues help to promote information sharing and increased levels of trust between the parties. In order to enable the political parties in Mozambique to contribute in an effective way to the reform debates, NIMD also invests in bilateral support for the parliamentary political parties, focusing on policy development and improved institutional and organizational capacities. Active democratic citizenship and increased interaction between civil society and local government is promoted through a Schools for Democracy Programme at the provincial level.

Tanzania

NIMD has been active in Tanzania since 2002. With support from NIMD, the six parliamentary parties established the Tanzanian Centre for Democracy (TCD) in 2005. In a political setting where the ruling party has an overwhelming majority in all elective bodies and the opposition is relatively weak, TCD provides a useful platform for dialogue on democratic reform issues including constitutional reform and political party laws. Political parties are enabled to formulate joint positions in these areas through interparty meetings, seminars,

exchange visits and public debates. Within the TCD programme special attention is paid to multiparty training and a mentoring programme to stimulate women and young members of political parties to run as candidates in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

Uganda

The NIMD programme in Uganda commenced in 2009. With support from NIMD, the six parliamentary parties in Uganda established an interparty dialogue platform in 2010. This platform, called the Interparty Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD), facilitates a constructive and inclusive political dialogue between the six parliamentary parties. IPOD serves as a neutral platform for political parties to interact with each other on democratic reforms, as well as with civil society and other democratic stakeholders, such as the Electoral Commission and a number of Parliamentary Committees. NIMD combines the facilitation of dialogue with political party strengthening in the areas of organisational capacity and policy formulation. An important aspect of the programme in Uganda is the South-South exchanges between NIMD programme countries, which have further shaped the IPOD reform agenda.

Zimbabwe

Since 2002, NIMD has assisted democratic forces in Zimbabwe through the Zimbabwe Institute (ZI), an independent NGO and think tank. NIMD's Zimbabwe programme focuses on democratic dialogue between the three parties in the unity government, as well as Zimbabwean civil society. Regular and fruitful interaction between the parties is enhanced through interparty meetings and workshops on interparty relations and issues of mutual concern such as political violence, constitutional reform and elections. The party leadership is exposed to interparty dialogue platforms in other NIMD programmes through peer-to-peer exchange visits, which provide them with positive examples of interparty cooperation.

Latin America

Bolivia

Since 2002, the NIMD programme in Bolivia has promoted interparty dialogue and provided technical assistance to lawmakers through the Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy (FBDM), an independent NGO. Institutional support is provided to a broad spectrum of political organisations and movements. In addition, the programme facilitates a dialogue between political and civil society in order to increase the ideological plurality in political representation at the departmental (sub-national) level. The Bolivia programme also focuses on democracy education in order to create awareness amongst citizens and the electorate on the constitution and related legislation.

Colombia

In 2011, NIMD commenced a joint programme in Colombia with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International IDEA. The programme supports a number of interparty dialogue platforms in the development of legislation and a strategy for inclusion. NIMD's contribution to the programme focuses on supporting the political parties in the elaboration and implementation of tools to enhance financial transparency; develop policies to improve the inclusivity of women, young people and ethnic minorities; and assist parties in the development of political programmes and programmatic proposals on issues of national interest.

Ecuador

In Ecuador, NIMD has worked with International IDEA since 2006 on a joint programme: *Agora Democrática*. The programme promotes inclusive politics by supporting a number of informal multiparty dialogue platforms, including the women's legislative group of the National Assembly and specialised committees. The programme also facilitates a local level multiparty dialogue on Ecuador's new decentralisation and autonomy legislation, and provides support to the National Election Council and political parties in the re-registering process. Within the programme, special attention is paid to stimulating young people's participation in politics through an interactive website, a voter educator tool, regional workshops, seminars and training.

Guatemala

The NIMD programme in Guatemala, which started in 2002, supports multiparty efforts to improve the functioning of political institutions nationally, and at a regional level in Central America. The facilitation of multiparty dialogue takes place through the Forum of Political Parties, and centres around creating a shared national agenda and policy development, with a focus on regional integration, security and institutional strengthening. The programme provides technical assistance to the Congress on various issues including political party legislation, as well as to other democratic stakeholders, such as the electoral management body and the Social Economic Council. Democracy education takes place at the local level in order to contribute to the development of the next generation of politicians.

Honduras

In 2012, NIMD commenced a programme in Honduras, with a focus on interparty dialogue around regional integration, security and institutional strengthening. Political parties are supported through a combination of dialogue activities, capacity building, technical assistance and peer-to-peer exchange visits.

Middle East, Northern Africa, Asia and the Caucasus

Egypt

In 2012, NIMD, in close collaboration with the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD) and the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI), established a programme in Egypt focusing on political education. By offering political education for young Egyptian people living in the regions, NIMD aims to strengthen Egypt's frail democracy and contribute to producing political activists groomed in democratic values, knowledge and skills. Should this part of the prospective programme prove successful, some form of political dialogue focusing on building trust will also be considered.

Georgia

In Georgia, NIMD has delivered a political parties assistance programme since 2005. In the absence of a permanent interparty dialogue platform, multiparty activities are organised on an informal, low-key and ad-hoc basis, around specific thematic issues. Particular attention is paid to policy analysis capacity building for political parties; internal party democracy development; and organisational development, aimed at enhancing the coherence of the parties' strategies and activities. The programme also aims to enhance the democratic skills and values of young party activists and NGO leaders through a Schools for Democracy Programme at the regional level.

Indonesia

Since 2002, NIMD has facilitated a democracy programme in Indonesia in partnership with the Indonesian Community for Democracy (KID). The programme supports a national dialogue process between the parliamentary political parties, based on a Needs Assessment conducted by the parties in 2010. Furthermore, the programme facilitates a political education programme, consisting of Democracy Schools in eight regions in Indonesia, through which young politicians, social activists and professionals are trained in democratic values and practices.

Tunisia

Since 2012, NIMD has facilitated a political education programme in Tunisia, in close collaboration with the Centre des Études Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI), DEMO Finland, and the Bulgarian School of Politics (BSoP). The programme aims to contribute to the development of a new generation of strong political and civic leaders by providing political party members and deputies from the Constituent Assembly with training in political leadership skills and general political knowledge.

Colophon

Copyright (CC) – Creative Commons Attribute-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Netherlands Licence. You are free to share and make derivative works of this publication only for non-commercial purposes and under the conditions that you appropriately attribute it, and that you distribute it only under a license identical to this one.

Published by NIMD, The Hague, The Netherlands © September 2012

Authors

Karijn de Jong
Anne-Mieke van Breukelen

Editing

David Prater
Judith van Tiggelen

Design

Stephan Csikós, The Hague, The Netherlands

Printing

ImPressed, Pijnacker, The Netherlands

To download the pdf file of this publication or other publications, please visit: www.nimd.org

Big. Small.
Left. Right.
Black. White.
And everything in between.

