

THE POWER OF INTER-PARTY DIALOGUE OUR STORIES

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Preface

Dear reader,
I take great pride in presenting this volume of stories, which offers the reader an intimate look at the work involved in promoting multiparty democracy. This is not a conventional organizational report, nor is it a collection of academic papers.

This volume contains the personal stories of those who have initiated and facilitated inter-party dialogue processes under very difficult and complex circumstances in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. It has been a great privilege to read these compelling stories and my heartfelt gratitude goes to the five Executive Directors who took the time to write them.

I am greatly indebted to the Executive Directors for their personal commitment, stamina and often personal sacrifices in making these inter-party dialogue processes work. I am equally grateful to NIMD's founding Executive Director for sharing his personal journey with us. His story describes the broader context within which NIMD was established. He furthermore explains the application of the unique NIMD approach in practise by using country specific illustrations.

In all of these stories, I am struck by the unique combination of three essential ingredients to make the inter-party dialogue processes work, namely political will of the host country, personal leadership of the Executive Directors and (financial) facilitation by NIMD.

This publication is the result of what we call our 'storytelling pilot' – NIMD's first venture into using stories as an alternative mode of exploring and documenting what we do, and how we do it. This pilot was inspired and driven by five Executive Directors who wanted to take time from their busy schedules to reflect on a decade's work in their countries, and share it with others. Furthermore, the sense of urgency for this publication was

heightened by the passing away of our beloved colleague in Bolivia, Guido Riveros. His death reminded us just how much knowledge lives in the heads and hearts of leaders like him.

The Executive Directors involved in this pilot gathered for storytelling and writing workshops to reflect on their experiences, and to write, rewrite and rewrite again. It is important to emphasize that these are their personal stories and that a writer's lens will focus on certain aspects and background others. A story is the recounting of a sequence of events, but a good story does not try to pack everything in – a good story is not flooded with too much information. Storytellers mine the wealth of their experience for events made significant, not because they were sensational or extraordinary, but because of the meaning they held and the changes they precipitated. Drawing on the particulars, facts and sequences of events that have been stored in their minds for years and years, each writer has shaped their experience into a story which is both evocative and explanatory.

The work described in their stories is the very heart of NIMD's work, and I have no doubt this publication will serve not only as testimony to their tireless efforts in supporting democracy but as a resource to enrich and engage the work of others. For this I would like to thank and congratulate the writers. I would also like to thank my colleagues who worked on this pilot, in particular Karijn de Jong, who initiated and managed it, and to Augustine Magolowondo and Eugenia Boutylkova, who supported and facilitated the process.

Let me end by wishing you a good read and expressing the hope that you will use these stories as an inspiration and reference point for your own practice.

Hans Bruning
NIMD Executive Director

Introducing the storytelling pilot on inter-party dialogue

by Karijn de Jong, NIMD Senior Programme Manager and Eugenia Boutylkova, NIMD Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator

A functional and effective democracy depends on 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, although more recently broad based social movements have taken a lead 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. Opportunities for equitable economic and human development increase significantly when elected leaders and government institutions are held accountable for decision-making and budget allocations. However, political organizations often struggle to fulfil their democratic roles in developing countries. NIMD was founded in order to take up the challenge of supporting political parties and assisting them in strengthening their democratic roles in society, such as influencing national development agendas and effectively controlling the executive.

Setting up and facilitating inter-party dialogue platforms (IPDs) has been one of NIMD's key strategies since its establishment in 2002. The unique feature of these platforms, which take different forms and shapes in the various NIMD programme countries, is that they bring together the leadership of both the ruling and opposition parties. These platforms, ranging from formal institutions to informal gatherings, facilitate and promote accommodative politics and consensus-oriented inter-party debate between parties across the political spectrum on concrete policy and political reform challenges.

Although it may sound easy to facilitate a dialogue process, actual practice presents a different picture. Engaging in constructive debate

on critical reforms has proven to be complex, particularly in highly informal political systems with a dominant party structure (which is the case in many NIMD programmes in Africa). Because a Parliament cannot always play its role effectively within these systems, NIMD has learned that there is merit in an (informal) inter-party dialogue process outside of the parliamentary limelight.

The NIMD-supported inter-party dialogue platforms bring together (usually all) parliamentary parties and operate on the basis of local ownership, inclusiveness and equality. 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 policy and reform issues. These platforms have generally become known as Centres for Multiparty Democracy (CMDs), although several countries use different names.

As part of NIMD's approach, explicit steps are taken to institutionalize the different IPDs, and to secure ownership and sustainability. As the institutionalization of IPDs 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 time frame 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.

Over the years, independent evaluations have confirmed that the NIMD approach is unique and that it has generated a set of tangible results

figure 1

National electoral cycle



(see box below). According to these reports, the key explanatory factors for NIMD's positive track record are its demand driven and risk taking approach; its guiding principles of ownership, flexibility, inclusiveness and long term engagement; and its approach that creates space for local actors to drive and manage the processes of change and allows for the development of home grown agendas in programme countries.¹

By and large, these evaluations and reports have looked at NIMD's objectives and documented results, challenges and lessons learned. Much of the focus therefore has been on *what* NIMD does

and the outcomes of this. Little, if any light has been shed on how this is done, despite the fact that this is exactly what we need to do in order to better understand the complexity and delicacy of the processes that underpin inter-party dialogue processes. We need to shine a spotlight on the 'how' questions in order to better appreciate and understand the critical skills sets that are required to turn these processes into successful political cooperation forums.

The storytelling pilot: purpose and process

In order to 'reveal' answers to the 'how' question, NIMD initiated the pilot project: 'Collecting, sharing and analysing five NIMD stories on how to facilitate an inter-party dialogue'. The pilot sought to discover what it actually takes to establish an IPD. We asked: How are parties who view each other as the 'enemy' convinced to sit around the same table and talk? Which techniques and tactics have been used to unlock stalemates encountered along the way? How can inter-personal and inter-party trust be built in a political society characterized by hostility?

We sought to reveal and document the various formal and informal steps that must be taken before the Secretary General of a ruling party in a country with a highly polarized political culture and a dominant party system shakes the hand of a Secretary General of an opposition party (who may in turn also have been perceived as

Key successes and lessons learned

Independent evaluations have confirmed that NIMD's approach has generated tangible results. Some of these successes include:

1. NIMD supported dialogue forums established and operational in fourteen partner countries, resulting in enhanced trust and emerging mutual cooperation between political leaders and political parties.
2. Stronger links between political parties and key democratic institutions (electoral commissions, parliamentary committees).
3. Improved legislation governing political parties (in the cases of Ghana, Kenya, Guatemala and Tanzania).
4. Development and alignment of democratic reform agendas created by the dialogue platforms into national policy and budget processes (including Ghana and Guatemala).
5. Organizational capacities, policy and campaign formulating skills and dialogue skills of staff and leadership of political parties improved in the majority of NIMD partner countries (as exemplified in Georgia, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania and Uganda).
6. Support for local and international multi-actor networks, which has resulted in local alliances around reform agendas and increased local resource mobilization.
7. Political education programmes established in seven partner countries, contributing to new generations of well trained young political practitioners (as in the cases of Georgia, Indonesia and Tunisia).

a personal enemy). Although we realize that it is often the small gestures that have the potential to resolve stalemates and determine the direction of a process in our kind of work, we tend to overlook them. Similarly, we do not pay sufficient attention to collecting, analysing and documenting these steps to further inform and enrich our approach.

We invited the Executive Directors (EDs) of five of our programme countries in Africa to participate in this pilot because we realized that the real stories behind the experiences, challenges and successes of NIMD's IPDs are locked in the heads of the professionals that set up, manage and guide these intricate processes. These professionals have all been able to use exactly the right skills at the right moment and combine them with a customized programme of activities that made the process work. They successfully managed the incredibly difficult balancing act of brokering political reform agendas on often highly contentious topics, while at the same time investing in trust and institution building, and ensuring that the ownership rested firmly with the leadership of the member parties.

Writing up the personal stories of these 'political brokers' – all but one of whom were also the

pioneer leaders responsible for the set up and facilitation of these IPD processes – has provided informed insights into what happened at the critical moments in a programme and what really lies behind a specific breakthrough or success. These stories reveal the true ins and outs of the dialogue processes. They complement NIMD's knowledge on what IPDs do and achieve with the essential knowledge of how this is realized.

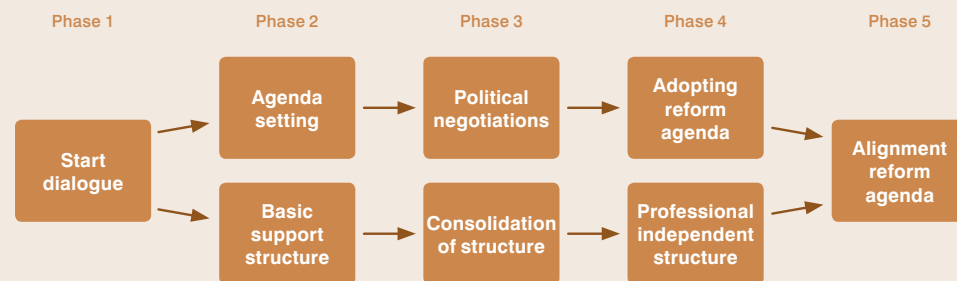
To ensure a degree of commonality in the country stories, we asked the Executive Directors to reflect on the various phases that the inter-party dialogue processes go through (at least in theory) during their life cycle. In practice, as the five country stories demonstrate, these processes do not always follow the logical sequencing of the various steps of the dialogue process presented in the figure below. A particular dialogue process may clash with polarized local relations and predatory practices on the part of politicians and political parties. Balancing the attention paid to the institutionalization processes of these forums, while at the same time ensuring a credible political reform agenda, has proven to be demanding. Once an IPD is functional, however, rates of return can be impressive as the experiences from the five countries demonstrate.

The storytelling pilot has been an iterative journey. We came together three times in 2013: first in South Africa in March, to start the process and document the raw stories, then in Kenya in June, to rewrite all the stories, and lastly in the Netherlands in October, to collectively validate the stories. At each meeting, the focus was on reflecting, writing, sharing and learning in a conducive and safe atmosphere. We used a variety of techniques to jog each other's memories and document the stories. These included free writing, with and without prompts, and oral storytelling in pairs, groups and even individual video recordings. Furthermore, we gave feedback on each other's stories, asking deeper questions and advising each other about the programmes on the basis of the stories. Between our gatherings, each of the EDs further deepened their stories, checked the relevant factual details and connected the dots between them.

As you will notice, each of the personal stories told in this volume is unique. They all deal with a unique situation and have their own unique angle, trajectory and techniques. However, these stories also share commonalities and overall themes. By collecting and analysing these common themes and trends, we aim to illustrate the bigger picture on inter-party dialogue and cooperation and document the lessons learned.

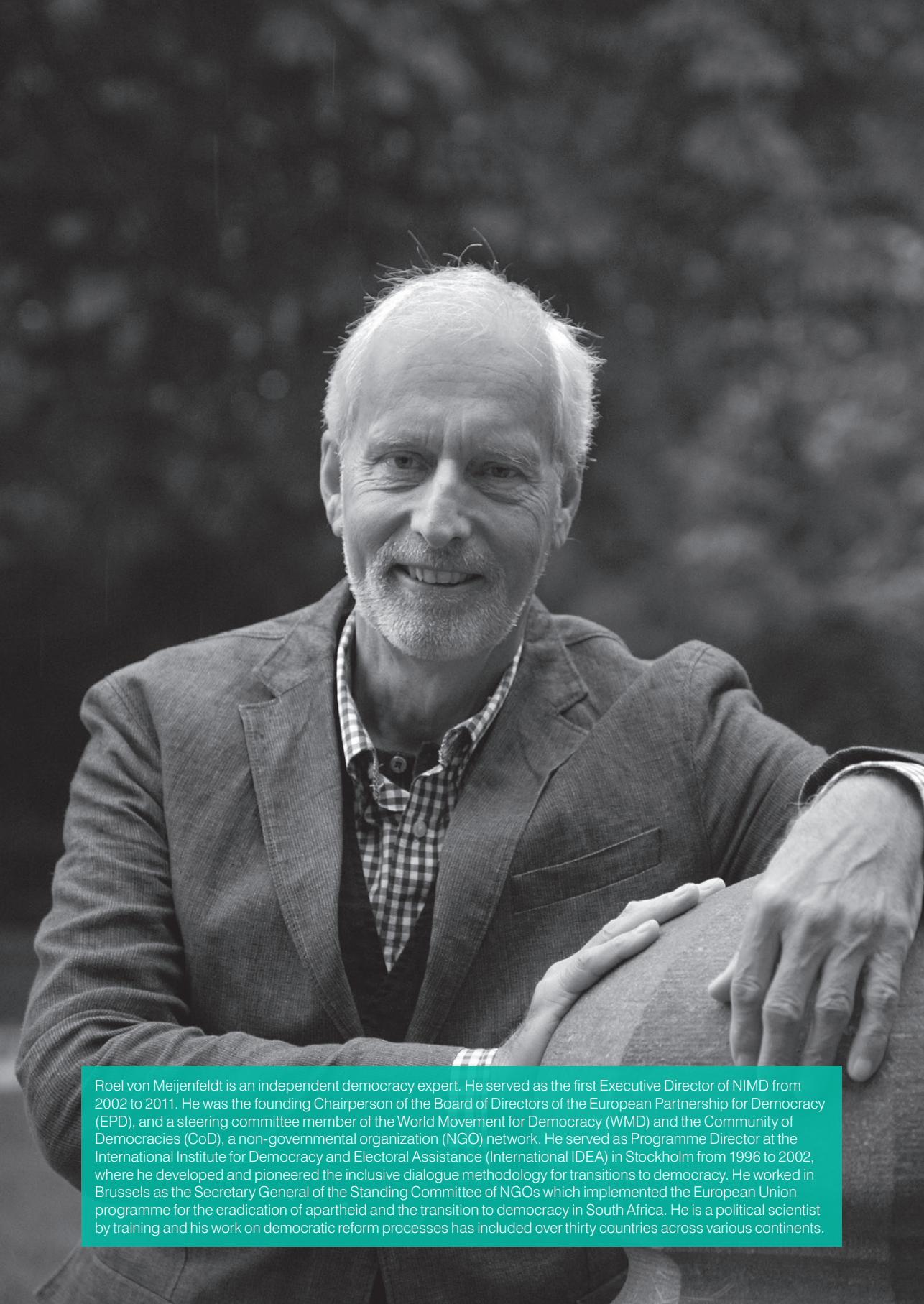
The case stories written by the Executive Directors in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda form the nucleus of this publication. They are bookended at the beginning by an account of NIMD's history, approach and guiding principles which provides the reader with a background to the stories, and at the end by an analysis which draws together the common themes and lessons learned from the stories and the storytelling process.

figure 2
The life cycle of an inter-party dialogue process



Group photo during the first storytelling workshop. From the left: Roel von Meijenfeldt, Augustine Magolowondo, Njeri Kabeberi, Karijn de Jong, Jean Mensa, Daniel Loya, Kizito Tenthani, Eugenia Boutylkova and Shaun Mackay. 29 March 2013, Misty Hills, South Africa.

¹ H. Slot, P. de Lange, R. Feddes and E. Kamphuis Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010), Evaluation of Dutch Support to Capacity Development: The case of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, The Hague; and L. Wild and A. Hudson (2009), UK support for Political Parties: A Stock-take, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), United Kingdom.



by Roel von Meijenfeldt

founding NIMD Executive Director

Innovation in democracy support: advocating inclusive dialogue

Roel von Meijenfeldt is an independent democracy expert. He served as the first Executive Director of NIMD from 2002 to 2011. He was the founding Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), and a steering committee member of the World Movement for Democracy (WMD) and the Community of Democracies (CoD), a non-governmental organization (NGO) network. He served as Programme Director at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in Stockholm from 1996 to 2002, where he developed and pioneered the inclusive dialogue methodology for transitions to democracy. He worked in Brussels as the Secretary General of the Standing Committee of NGOs which implemented the European Union programme for the eradication of apartheid and the transition to democracy in South Africa. He is a political scientist by training and his work on democratic reform processes has included over thirty countries across various continents.

Setting the scene

During the 1990s, at the height of the so-called third wave of democracy, many countries turned to multiparty democracy in response to popular demand and the new international context following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of apartheid in South Africa.² However, fair and open competition for political power in clean elections, with peaceful alternation of power, remained very contentious practices in emerging democracies.

Many new democracies had endured the ‘one man, one vote, one time’ political culture. ‘Winner takes all’ and ‘big man politics’ were the prevailing attitudes. It was not enough to enshrine multiparty democracy in constitutions to guarantee the practice of democracy. Investment was needed to enhance the level of trust in the political arena and to assist with the institutionalization of key components of a functioning democracy, such as political parties. Political parties were correctly considered the ‘weakest link’ in the emergence and consolidation of multiparty democracies.³

Political party support at the time was mainly provided by political parties in the West to political parties in the South. It was based on the assumption that the political cleavages along traditional ideological lines in the West could be repeated in young democracies. This approach had been reasonably successful in countries on the European continent – including Greece, Portugal and Spain, and later the former communist countries of central and eastern Europe – that had overturned their authoritarian regimes for democracy and subsequently qualified to join the European Union.

Although the senior leadership of NIMD recognized the relevance of sharing experience with parties in emerging democracies, it also realized that exporting or proselytizing ideologies or religious beliefs, exporting the political party model of the West – a model itself under public scrutiny – was an outdated concept and would not make a useful contribution in emerging democracies.

This realization meant that a new approach had to be developed for which no textbooks existed. The establishment of NIMD in 2001 pioneered this new approach in the pursuit of advancing democracy. Seven Dutch political parties, covering the full political spectrum in the Netherlands at that time, undertook to jointly support multiparty democracy and, within that context, the institutional development of political parties in young and emerging democracies.⁴ In other words, an institute of political parties for political parties.

When meeting political leaders in future partner countries in my capacity as the newly appointed Executive Director (ED) of NIMD, I generally met with surprise and often, it has to be said, incomprehension. How was it possible that political parties with adverse political interests, and sometimes considerable animosity, could work together for a common purpose? After all, political leaders in prospective partner countries would not ever, or only very rarely, speak to each other and were often sworn enemies.

In Europe, the multiparty cooperation that NIMD embodied met with suspicion from political parties which were used to providing party-to-party support along political ideological lines and felt challenged by this new multiparty approach. It would take a number of years and much international networking by NIMD, including hosting the European conference in July 2004 in the Peace Palace in The Hague, until the political party support fraternity started to accept the merits of the multiparty approach that NIMD introduced. Based on a growing positive track record, the NIMD approach gradually came to be seen as complementing rather than competing with the traditional party-to-party or bilateral approaches.

The added value of the NIMD approach was its focus on supporting political leadership across political divides. Starting at the top level of party Presidents and Secretaries General, we engaged the leadership to take joint responsibility for deepening democracy in their countries while simultaneously investing in the institutionalization of their political parties. Stability and economic development needed a strong democratic foundation. Was this not the collective responsibility of political leaders, regardless of whether they were in government or opposition?

How did we go about mobilizing the political will to take collective responsibility to invest in necessary reforms to make their democracies perform better? We faced two main challenges.

The first and most important challenge was to gain the confidence of the political leaders in prospective partner countries. Why should political leaders accept assistance from political parties of a European country (in this case, the Netherlands) in addressing necessary political reforms in their own countries? I’ll highlight the approach we followed and some of the incentives which were instrumental in fostering the partnerships later in this chapter.

The second challenge was to convince the international development community of the value of investing in political parties and their leadership. This type of support was, and unfortunately still is, generally considered to be ‘too political to touch’, despite the recognition in development policies that ‘politics matters’ for creating conducive and sustainable conditions for socio-economic development. International development assistance tends to focus on ‘governance’ and on civil society development, leaving political society and support for multiparty democracy mostly out of the aid equation.⁵

Over the past few years building bridges between development cooperation and democracy support in order to enhance the impact of both has been a major challenge.

This chapter gives an account of how NIMD first began and how it went about its mandate. Did the innovative NIMD approach succeed in institutionalizing sustainable dialogue processes with a positive impact on the deepening of multiparty democracy in the partner countries?

NIMD's inception

Dutch political parties had been supportive of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle to different degrees. Some were solidly supportive over many decades, others less so. By 1994, everyone wanted to be part of the Nelson Mandela 'magic' and was eager to be seen as supportive of the transition he led. The question was, how could Dutch support for the anti-apartheid struggle be transformed into support for the new democracy? This question was raised with the inclusive South African Government led by the African National Congress (ANC). The answer was clear: political parties were to be the pillars of the new democracy and would welcome assistance from Dutch political parties in preparing for this new role.

The Dutch political parties agreed to work together in support of political party development in the new South Africa and in 1994 established the Dutch Foundation for a New South Africa (NZA) with financial support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to do so. NZA was a small foundation to which the participating political parties contributed, staff capacity to implement its programme. This was NIMD's immediate predecessor.

One of the conditions the Ministry imposed was that the new multiparty dispensation required support for all registered political parties in South Africa, whereas in the past, all support for the anti-apartheid struggle had been channelled through the ANC or ANC-affiliated organizations. Although the financial support was jointly managed, each Dutch political party developed its own relationship with one of the political parties in South Africa. The financial resources were allocated according to the number of seats each party had won in the South African Parliament in the 1994 general elections. This meant that the ANC, which won sixty-three per cent of the votes and seats in Parliament, received the lion's share of the support.

After a 1998 evaluation of the NZA programme showed positive results, Nelson Mandela suggested the Dutch extend this type of cooperation to other young democracies which had fewer financial resources than South Africa.⁶ Mozambique was mentioned as an example, and the programme was subsequently extended to the political parties of that country.

At the insistence of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NZA ended its financial support for South African political parties following the 1999 general elections. The argument was that after two successful general elections, South Africa had transitioned to a consolidated multiparty democracy and further assistance to political parties was no longer required.

The political leadership of NZA realized that the establishment of an organization with a permanent, professional staff under the joint management of the seven participating political parties would be necessary if this support was to be extended to a wider number of young democracies in Africa, Asia, Central Europe and Latin America. It took time to prepare for this new institute, which eventually resulted in the launch of NIMD in 2001.

When I took responsibility as the first NIMD Executive Director in March 2002, the NIMD Board of Directors – comprised of senior leaders of the seven participating political parties – had already entered into agreements with political parties in Bolivia and Guatemala and had selected a further ten countries in the South which classified both as newly emerging democracies and as countries qualifying for Official Development Assistance (ODA).⁷ The selection was carried out by the NIMD Board based on a set of criteria and following initial identification missions to potential partner countries to gauge possible interest.⁸ These were usually countries where Dutch political parties already had a relationship with one of the local political parties. While the initial selection was done by NIMD, the countries themselves were obviously free to choose whether or not to enter into a partnership with NIMD.

Ironically, our multi-annual institutional funding was not yet in place, with only ad hoc funding forthcoming from the Ministry, as the political agreement to fund NIMD for the period 2002–04 had not yet been approved in writing. The consensus among Dutch politicians to continue and expand inter-party cooperation was based on the assumption that more of the same assistance could be made available to a greater number of new democracies in the South. However, this political consensus met with reservations within the administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The funding of political parties and of NIMD (in particular in terms of volume) itself was a contentious issue within the Ministry, and resulted in a cautious relationship between the Ministry and NIMD during the first few years.⁹

The only way to qualify for longer-term funding was to apply under a new Dutch financial regulation for non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁰ Consequently, NIMD prepared its first multi-annual programme and budget for the 2003–06 period during the summer of 2002.¹¹ After the Dutch Parliament unanimously endorsed the NIMD budget request in November 2002, a significant amount for partnership programmes in sixteen countries for a period of four years was granted by the Ministry in April 2003. The new organization was finally ready to engage in partnerships with a longer-term commitment. The launch of NIMD and the support provided by the Dutch Government

represented a progressive and significant effort to strengthen the role and capacity of political parties at the heart of multiparty democracy development.

The assessment of the cooperation with South African political parties was reappraised and the cooperation was once again taken up shortly after NIMD's launch, although this time without bilateral funding for the South African political parties. The new cooperation focused on the facilitation of an IPD and sharing of experiences through the regional cooperation programme with political parties across Africa.

Rationale for the NIMD approach

NIMD's mandate was to assist with advancing multiparty democracy and, within that objective, to increase the institutionalization of political parties.

Although we had inherited the practice of providing bilateral support to political parties for their institutional development – the old party-to-party approach that NZA used in South Africa – I was unconvinced that this would necessarily result in the deepening of democracy. Based on my background as a political scientist and my experience in democracy support, I knew that you could not deal with political parties in isolation from the wider political society and still hope to strengthen democracy. Although political parties are key institutions, they are not the only ones involved in making democracy work. Parliaments or legislatures, civil society groups and the media are other institutions that together make up political society, while regulatory frameworks such as electoral systems, constitutions, and political party laws are important in shaping how political parties and multiparty democracy function.

The situation in Mozambique is a good example: Frelimo is the dominant party, with Renamo as the main opposition party. These were the two principal political actors, but there were another more than thirty registered parties in the country. Despite being insignificant role-players, these more than thirty registered parties qualified for NIMD assistance under the old practice of providing bilateral party support. Investing in these small parties was, in my opinion, carrying water to the sea – an ineffective use of resources. Yet, it is also true that the initial support to one and all helped establish NIMD's credibility as an impartial partner in Mozambique and served us well in later years when refocusing the programme on inter-party cooperation and institutional reforms.

To contribute to democratic reform in Mozambique, or in any emerging democracy, one needs to know the 'bigger picture' of its political society, and who better than the main political actors within that country to forge a composite picture and implement the reforms that an analysis thereof might suggest? If change was to be pursued peacefully – and that was the core thrust of the NIMD mandate and programme – the political principals had to drive the process themselves. Without their political will to implement

reforms, the best that could be hoped for was a continuation of the status quo; at worst, renewed conflict would occur.

Adhering to the critical rule that democracy has to grow from within and not from beyond, our guiding imperative was to work on a strictly impartial basis with the political leadership. Our work was to assist in facilitating the leadership's analysis of the state of their own democracy and to prepare agendas for necessary reforms to improve democratic governance. The institutional development of different political parties was an essential part of these agendas.

Based on my experience in supporting democratic reform processes, I was very aware that the lack of trust between politicians in emerging democracies, and between politicians and civil society leaders, was a major source of instability and conflict in partner countries.¹² Investments in democracy and political parties needed to be made in a manner that enhanced trust among political actors, and between them and their civil society counterparts. With greater levels of trust among them, leaders can be expected to play by the commonly agreed rules within their constitutional dispensations more readily.

This approach is consistent with political theory, which holds that democracy becomes the only game in town when political conflicts are habitually resolved according to established norms and when the costs of violating these norms are too high.¹³ Dialogue is the main vehicle for resolving conflicts of interest peacefully, and is therefore NIMD's central mode of operation. To sustain dialogues in partner countries, the process gradually institutionalized into IPD platforms which became permanent catalysts for democratic reforms.

How NIMD entered into partnerships

In the story of NIMD, two often-raised questions stand out: First, how did NIMD manage to gain the confidence of political party leaders? Second, which incentives made party leaders decide to cooperate with this Dutch political party organization?

While NIMD itself was in the process of developing a coherent methodology for implementing its mandate, the first contacts with selected partner countries were already taking place. Board members, NIMD staff and I undertook an intensive travel schedule, visiting the first twelve selected countries in order to introduce ourselves to a wide range of political and civil society leaders. As the Executive Director, I was thoroughly probed and tested during these introductory meetings: What kind of agenda NIMD was driving? How much money would be made available? These visits took place at a moment in history when the notion of advancing democracy through 'regime change' by military intervention came into use as a result of the invasion of Iraq by a US-led

coalition in March 2003. This gave international democracy support a ‘bad name’ and made it more difficult for me to convince counterparts in the South about our genuine intentions.¹⁴

Our first contacts and discussions were not made any easier by the answers: that our agenda was to assist in facilitating local reform agendas; that we, as an institute of political parties for political parties, were not a development organization but were instead looking for political cooperation; and that we could only act at the initiative of joint platforms of political parties representing the spectrum of political parties and movements in partner countries.

As for the question about how much money would be made available, I was hesitant to answer it at this early stage. We wanted the envisaged partnerships to be agenda-driven and not money-driven. It took all of my diplomatic skills to hold meetings with party leaders and establish a foundation for the future partnership without answering that ‘million-dollar question’.

NIMD’s entry and approach was understandably met with questions and a healthy dose of suspicion by prospective partners, especially those already familiar with donor organizations and their agendas. What perhaps triggered our eventual acceptance was the fact that NIMD itself was an organization in which political parties of various tendencies cooperate for a common objective. The fact that political parties in the Netherlands managed to sit around the table often met with the response: ‘If you can do it, we can do it, so let’s do it’.

In Ghana, for example, the Chairpersons of the four political parties represented in Parliament (which included the President himself), started to meet as a result of the Ghanaian Political Party Programme. The meetings, which were held on a regular basis, enabled party leaders to discuss political developments and address potential conflicts at an early stage before they could spin out of control. These encounters were referred to as ‘nipping the buds’. The Secretaries General of the political parties also started to meet monthly to discuss common political party interests. Similarly, four newly appointed Policy Officers met to assist the parties with the development of policy platforms. This positively influenced the nature of political interactions in Ghana and the increased policy orientation helped to improve the public perception of political parties in Ghana.

Similar forms of inter-party cooperation emerged in other partner countries, although the ownership principle ensured that the process and structure of cooperation, as well as the pace at which the cooperation came about, differed from country to country. Within NIMD we needed to be exceptionally flexible and inventive in our programming in response to the changing political dynamics and time horizons of the reforms in the different partner countries.

The Africa Regional Programme (ARP), which NIMD initiated in 2004, became the vehicle through which the political leaders of the partner countries in Africa started to meet at regular intervals.¹⁵ In my experience, this regional platform became the strongest and most successful incentive for leaders to join the cooperation and to engage political rivals in a more constructive and productive manner.¹⁶ ARP was initiated as a platform to share experiences and to learn from each other. The first meeting was organized in Muldersdrift, South Africa, at the time of the tenth anniversary of South Africa’s successful transition to multiparty democracy. The regional programme facilitated meetings and exchange visits which became important occasions for sharing experiences, peer reviews of reform processes and for taking new initiatives.

In addition to ARP, the political leaders of the partner countries were also invited once a year to meet with NIMD to review the partnership, to share South–South and North–South experiences, and to discuss the way forward for the cooperation. These events are called the NIMD Partnership Days. The first Partnership Days invested a lot of time in elaborating and agreeing on a Declaration of Partnership Principles to guide the relationship between NIMD and its partners. These meetings also assisted in creating the foundations for an international network of political party democracy catalysts capable of sharing experiences with countries in transition to multiparty democracy.

Finally, getting back to the question of budgets and financial support: grants for the institutional development of political parties formed another important incentive for cooperation, especially for small and underfunded opposition parties. NIMD was the only international agency that dared to fund political parties directly, and to develop a transparent method that worked without creating animosity.

Institutionalizing inter-party dialogues

Deepening democracy and building political parties into sustainable institutions cannot be achieved overnight. The dialogues that political leaders engaged in needed to be sustained over time. Because democracy requires permanent renewal to ensure that it adapts to transforming societies, providing various forms of support for the institutionalization of the IPDs became one of NIMD’s major activities.

Different institutional models for the IPDs have emerged over the past decade. The most common model was for political leaders to establish their own organization to manage and facilitate the IPD and capacity strengthening programmes. Another model was to identify an existing institution in their country that was seen to be impartial and knowledgeable and which could facilitate the dialogue and implement its decisions. A third model involved political parties asking NIMD to facilitate the IPD through its country office.

As an example of the first model, in Kenya the leaders of the political parties did not accept any of the existing Kenyan organizations. Instead they chose to establish their own organization, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya (CMD–K). Similar decisions were taken in other African partner countries: in Tanzania, with the founding of the Tanzania Centre for Democracy (TCD); in Malawi, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy Malawi (CMD–M); in Zambia, the Zambia Centre for Inter-party Dialogue (ZCID); and in Mali, le Centre pour le Dialogue Inter-Partis et la Démocratie (CMDID).

An example of the second model is the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) in Ghana. After considering different options, the already established IEA was unanimously chosen by all parties to take up the responsibility of managing the political party programme. Although its name would seem to suggest otherwise, IEA has today become an important facilitator of the consolidation of democracy in Ghana. An example of the third option is Uganda, where the Inter-party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) is managed through NIMD's Uganda office. In Zimbabwe, NIMD started working with the political think-tank the Zimbabwe Institute (ZI).

All of these new platforms are governed and managed by the parties themselves. However, because of the weak political party infrastructure in most participating young democracies and the polarized inter-party relations, NIMD was required to monitor the institutional development of these platforms closely and, when necessary, intervene through consultations to keep the process on track. The platforms were a new ball game, and not everyone involved played by the rules under which they were established. If it was difficult to gather political adversaries around the table for dialogue, it was even more challenging to assist them with the management of a joint institution. The establishment of these new institutions, and nurturing them towards institutional maturity, formed a steep learning curve for NIMD as well.

Finding the right EDS for these platforms who possessed adequate standing, knowledge, diplomatic and networking skills, and who furthermore were seen to be impartial by governing parties and the opposition, was probably the most difficult task my staff and I encountered. There was a lot at stake when it came to ensuring that people with the right set of skills and a strong character were selected, because the development and sustainability of the IPDs would, to a large extent, depend on the EDS' political and management talents.

To provide protection from undue domestic political pressure, it was decided to keep some of the EDS on NIMD's payroll for a period of time. These EDS thus held a position of dual accountability, towards their own Board of Directors composed of political party leaders on one hand, and to NIMD on the other. Not an easy position at all. This duality was not always appreciated either by the local politicians or the Boards of Directors. Nevertheless, it served its purpose during the initial years until the institutionalization of the IPDs had matured sufficiently to adapt or end the EDS' employment relationship with NIMD.

Although the IPDs are political party cooperation platforms, in most countries these platforms have also become instrumental in forging more cooperative relations with other institutions, such as civil society organizations, churches, the media, the private sector and the security institutions. This has worked both ways. Better relations with all these institutions helped political parties to focus on policy issues without being on the defensive all the time, and also provided these other institutions with a channel to liaise with political leaders through an impartial platform without being perceived as biased towards one of the political forces.

With the IPDs maturing and able to demonstrate track records, NIMD started to retreat as the exclusive partner. We strongly encouraged the IPDs to diversify their partnerships to include other international agencies willing to support locally driven democratic reform processes and the institutional development of political parties. This process of expanding the partnerships and diversifying the funding sources put new demands on the IPDs' management. In theory, international agencies welcome local reform agendas, especially when agreement has been reached across the political spectrum. However, the practice is more complex than that. It takes a lot of time and effort to connect the work and potential of the IPDs to the agendas of the multilateral and bilateral development agencies and for IPDs to learn to deal with the particular funding requirements.

Together with the EDS, I devoted considerable time and effort to meeting with in-country representatives of development agencies interested in democratic governance to discuss the attractiveness of establishing a joint 'basket' fund in support of IPDs and their programmes, so as to manage transaction costs effectively. A 'basket' fund would avoid the bureaucratization of IPDs (at the expense of their political function) in administering the different regulations of different donor partners. This 'basket' approach is successfully applied in the case of the support provided to IPOD in Uganda and deserves to be emulated in other partner countries as well.

Evolution of the reform agendas

Support for the institutionalization of IPDs became one pillar under the NIMD programme. The other pillar was the support for the dialogues themselves and in particular the substantive topics which were put on the agendas.

When NIMD first began its work, assistance to individual political parties was the central focus. However, when the political parties commenced their cooperation in the platforms, issues of general concern about how their democracy functioned were identified and activities were undertaken to resolve these.

The first activities usually related to problems in the electoral process. Codes of conduct were drafted and political parties agreed to adhere to them both during election campaign-

ning and in between elections. The Ghanaian parties, for example, agreed on a modality, using civil society organizations, to monitor the implementation of their code and to name and shame parties not complying with the agreed code. Other issues tackled included the relationship with the electoral commissions, the registration process, voting rights for nationals and those in the diaspora, the need to address the unbalanced gender membership in parliaments and in the leadership of political parties, and a review of the electoral system itself.

A second cluster of topics on the agendas related to the regulatory frameworks for political parties, such as the political party legislation and laws regulating state funding of political parties.

Many of the reforms under discussion also touched upon the need for a review of parts of the Constitution, or of a complete constitutional overhaul. Changing the electoral system, for example, would necessitate amending the Constitution. Rebalancing executive, legislative and juridical powers would also require a review of the Constitution.

Much of the political contestation in countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Zambia was over the process through which constitutional reviews would take place. Who was in control of the process? How participatory would it be? Would it be decided through a referendum or in Parliament? Many of these questions needed to be resolved before successful constitutional reviews could be undertaken. The IPDs came to play important roles in finding solutions for polarized and often deadlocked positions about the process for creating new constitutions, as well as their content.

The final cluster of activities relate to supporting the institutional development of the political parties themselves. To avoid potential pitfalls in funding generally weak political party institutions, the initial ‘drawing rights’ approach was amended.¹⁷ The responsibility for allocating and administering funds was transferred to the collective platforms of the IPDs. Allocation formulas, funding priorities and procedures had to be collectively decided within accountability parameters set by NIMD. If one of the parties failed to comply or used funds irresponsibly, the IPD had to act to solve the problem. In this way a social control mechanism was created and peer pressure exerted to guarantee good governance in administering the use of political party funds. Over one hundred and fifty political parties have received support during the past ten years. These modalities secured compliance with the reporting requirements. Only a minor number of cases in which funds were not properly accounted for were reported.

From the perspective of the sustainability of the investment in political parties, it is more important that this approach to funding political parties introduces a practice that becomes a template for future state funding for political parties, as happened in Kenya when this practice was consolidated into a new Act.

Beyond all these activities – which aimed at anchoring multiparty democracy not only more firmly into laws, regulations and procedures, but also into a democratic culture – some of the IPDs played extraordinary roles when political processes collapsed and countries were at the point of meltdown. When Kenya was burning at the end of 2007 and early 2008 following the presidential election, CMD-K was one of the first organizations to return to work, mobilizing Kenyans to restore peace and respect for human rights and to organize nationwide coalitions to stop the mayhem and find political solutions for the causes of the violence. Their work fed directly into the mediation by the Kofi Annan team.

Highlights and headaches of ten years’ experience in political party support

The rather simple party-to-party approach with which NIMD started in 2002 has since developed into a far more complex programme that has tangible impacts on reform processes in partner countries and on the institutional development of political parties in these countries. The positive lesson is that support for reforms can and should be implemented without causing political or diplomatic conflict between NIMD and its partner countries, and therefore cementing better relations between the countries involved.

The demand for cooperation and the pace at which it has expanded has been remarkable, given the highly political contexts in which NIMD operates. Looking back, the secret of this success, in my opinion, is the consistent emphasis on and implementation of local ownership in the management of the programmes. A productive dynamic was established through respect for local political leadership on a strictly impartial basis and engaging leadership as the principal drivers of change.

Inter-party cooperation has also proved an invaluable instrument for preventing political conflicts spilling over into violence. Even in cases where violence suddenly explodes – as happened in Kenya in 2007–08 and threatened to happen in Ghana in 2008 – such cooperation has led to the immediate mobilization of political and civil society in defence of democracy and human rights. In this regard, IPDs are contributing to a political culture in which conflicts of interest are resolved peacefully and within the setting of the constitutional provisions.

The political reform agendas and strategies jointly agreed by political leaders have as yet unexplored potential to be aligned with national development plans and strategies. As Amartya Sen said: “A country does not have to be deemed fit for democracy; rather, it has to become fit through democracy.”¹⁸ There is a world to be won if the political reform processes and development strategies can reinforce each other by harmonizing national planning processes. Ghana pioneered reaching consensus about a national Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DSCP) after nationwide consultations. The DSCP spells out the

concrete reforms necessary to deepen democracy and helped inform a constitutional review process. Ghana is also the first country to link a DSCP with the national development agenda, that is, the Ghana Vision 2020 and the Ghana Share Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA).

The story is not complete without sharing some of the ‘headaches’ which I encountered in managing the NIMD programme. Two stand out:

The first concerned the accommodation of new administrative funding regulations and tender procedures with the principles underlying democracy support, and specifically the need for long-term engagements, continuity in support, and the flexibility to respond to changing political dynamics on the ground. There was an increasing gap between the two imperatives resulting in more bureaucracy relative to capacity for strategic interventions and support: a tendency which threatened to undermine the effectiveness of the new approach pioneered by NIMD.

The second headache concerned the challenge to assist the IPDs in maintaining the momentum of the political reform processes. These processes have a tendency to get bogged down and turn into sterile dances around the status quo. Providing relevant political mentorship to the managers of the IPDs and assisting them in applying creative and informed strategies in response to the unfolding political dynamics has required NIMD to draw on deep insights into political transition processes in each of the partner countries. This in my experience, represents the real and most challenging added value of what NIMD brings to these partnership.

When NIMD was founded in 2002, it was a new instrument with a new approach and a determination to advance multiparty democracy. Today, a large number of IPDs, managed by political leaders from across the political spectrum, function in fourteen emerging democracies. Sustainable local capacity to drive democratic reform agendas from within exists in these countries today. The next chapters tell the inside stories of five of these IPDs and how they have become more or less permanent catalysts for peaceful democratic reform in their countries. Where democratic development is increasingly under pressure in today’s world, and with autocratic governance tendencies re-emerging, it demonstrates that democracy support can make a positive difference.

Roel von Meijenfheldt

founding NIMD Executive Director

- 2 The term ‘third wave’ was coined by Samuel P. Huntington in his book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. It refers to the third major surge of democracy in history, which started in 1974 with the Carnation Revolution of Portugal and continued in the 1980s in Latin America and Asia and in the 1980s to Eastern Europe and Africa. The 2011 Arab Spring and the reforms in Burma have prompted suggestions of a start of a fourth wave of democracy, although this reference remains contested.
- 3 See Carothers, T., *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).
- 4 The founding political parties of NIMD were: CDA (Christian Democratic Party), PvdA (Labour Party), VVD (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy), D66 (Democrats 66), GroenLinks (Green Party), CU (Christian Union) and SGP (Reformed Political Party).
- 5 Political society is generally not well understood. In many international assistance programmes, a distinction is made between governance and civil society. However, political society and governance are not synonyms. Political society is the distinct process and institutional framework through which citizens participate in public policy making and in competing for political power. The foremost institutions in this process are political parties, but not exclusively; civil society and the media, for example, are important institutions with a role in aggregating societal interests into policies.
- 6 Throughout the history of NIMD, Nelson Mandela has always been credited with suggesting the extension of cooperation to new and young democracies less well-off than South Africa, which led to the formation of NIMD and an expansion of support to sixteen countries and today to twenty-four countries. However, I have not been able to pin down this statement in a historical record.
- 7 The original twelve countries included in the multi-annual 2003–06 programme were Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, South Africa, Surinam, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. During this period, Burundi, Ecuador, Georgia, Kenya and Uganda were added. Today, the programme has extended to include Benin, Colombia, Egypt, Honduras, Jordan, Libya, South Sudan, Tunisia and Myanmar.
- 8 The criteria used included: 1) countries which choose to be multiparty democracies; 2) political parties willing to cooperate with Dutch political parties; and 3) countries which fall under the ODA criteria.
- 9 The reservations within the administration of the Ministry related to a combination of factors, including distrust of politicians in Parliament deciding on allocation of funds to an organization managed by political parties, fear that support for political parties may risk diplomatic conflict in relations with third countries and concern that NIMD was taking off too fast.
- 10 The Theme-based Co-financing Regulation (TMF).
- 11 The programme was titled: “Without democracy, nobody fares well”.
- 12 Observation by President Chissano of Mozambique at an Africa Regional Meeting organized by NIMD in Accra, Ghana, (2006).
- 13 See writings of such students of democratic transition and consolidation as Huntington, Mainwaring, O’Donnell and Valenzuela.
- 14 Wording coined by Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State of the USA and President of the National Democratic Institute at a conference hosted by NIMD at the International Peace Palace in The Hague in July 2004.
- 15 The Africa Regional Programme (ARP) was established in two steps. It started with the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Programme (EASARP) and the West-Africa Regional Programme (WARP), with both regions subsequently merged into one African network in ARP when sharing experiences across both sub-regions proved beneficial to both.
- 16 The changed disposition in the relations between leaders of governing and opposition parties was well captured by the Secretary-General of the Ghanaian CCP when he observed in an evaluation of the programme: “Through the dialogue process facilitated by NIMD, we learned to disagree without becoming disagreeable.”
- 17 ‘Drawing rights’ functioned as the system in which NIMD would annually allocate an amount of money for each participating political party, with the amount determined by a formula based on the proportion of the party’s seats in Parliament. The parties would submit project proposals for a number of defined political party activities (other than buildings, vehicles and election campaigning) for approval by NIMD and under strict contractual conditions. Depending on approval by NIMD of financial and programme reports, funding would be continued. This traditional development funding approach was soon changed by transferring responsibility to manage the funding and accounting to the inter-party dialogue platforms themselves.
- 18 Quote from Amartya Sen from: *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press 1999.

Ghana's political landscape



'To whom?' This was the response of former Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings to calls by civil society organizations to hand over power after having ruled for eleven years under the aegis of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) and after eight years as an elected president. Clearly, he had no intention of ever handing over to the opposition. However, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won the 2000 elections. Rawlings, who openly declared his dislike for multiparty democracy, grudgingly handed over power to the opposition. The electoral defeat of his party ushered the nation into an era of liberalism and freedom. Political

parties in Ghana began to assert themselves, and the idea of multiparty democracy that had been relegated to the background for so long suddenly resurged.

During the days of civilian and then military dictatorship, political parties were not free to fully associate and interact with one another. Indeed, there was a strong culture of silence in Ghana that made it dangerous for political parties to thrive, associate, openly criticize or even make their views on national issues known. National interest was nebulously determined by the Rawlings regime and no other party could contribute to it.

By the year 2002 the liberal government regime led by J.A. Kufuor had settled; political parties had found their place in the Ghanaian democratic space; and the need for leadership of all political parties to dialogue with one another and build their institutional capacities was becoming a priority to them and to many other well meaning Ghanaians. The timing of the NIMD mission to Ghana could not have been better.



by Jean Mensa

Executive Director, Institute of Economic Affairs and Ghana Political Parties Programme

Ghana: Facilitating multiparty dialogue: the importance of a neutral broker

Jean Mensa is the Executive Director of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), Ghana's premier public policy institute, and Coordinator of the Ghana Political Parties Programme. She is a lawyer by profession and a leader of thought in Ghana on governance and democratic issues. Ms Mensa has carved a niche for herself in the field of policy research and advocacy as well as in the development of policy alternatives including the Presidential Transition Act of 2012; the Revised 1992 Constitution of Ghana (draft); the Political Parties Funding Bill and the Revised Political Parties Bill. Ms Mensa was a tireless advocate for the review of Ghana's 1992 Constitution and served as a Commissioner of the Government-established Constitution Review Commission. She is currently a member of the Government Committee tasked with preparing the Affirmative Action Bill.

Opening the newspaper, the headlines read: ‘Government Backs Down!’ And it had. From that moment we knew that the Ghana Political Parties Programme (GPPP) could really bring change. We knew we were on the right track and that all we had to do was to continue working together as a credible and respected programme. All we had to do was deepen cordiality and unity among members. All we had to do was build parties’ capacities and encourage political leaders to speak out against activities that run contrary to the tenets of democracy and to pursue those that build it.

Two days before that red-letter headline, the *Daily Graphic*, Ghana’s state-owned newspaper, carried a photograph of the Secretaries General from each of the four parliamentary parties seated at the same table. In fact, media coverage of the press briefing was extensive, with front page stories in several newspapers. This was just what we wanted. The placement of the Secretaries General at the same table was strategic and not at all coincidental. We knew it would provide a great photo opportunity and that the photographs would speak volumes, perhaps even more than the contents of the briefing itself. Indeed, the iconic photo immediately sparked public debate on both television and radio, and was discussed nationwide for two whole days. It was this kind of public pressure, together with the strong message from the Secretaries General, which led first to a Cabinet meeting and then the headline.

The Secretaries Generals’ message was straightforward: they wanted the Government to rescind a decision they believed to be unconstitutional. The ruling party had announced its intention to establish a committee to oversee the operations and dealings of the Electoral Commission. But according to the Constitution, the Electoral Commission was an independent, autonomous body. How then could it be overseen by a committee? The Secretaries General were concerned such a committee would undermine the Electoral Commission’s independence and usurp its powers. They were concerned that this would lead to a loss in their credibility, result in a lack of trust among the public, and ultimately to the rejection of Electoral Commission pronouncements during elections, including the possible rejection of election results.

Remarkable as the occasion was, the most extraordinary part of this story is not the photo, nor the Government’s response. The surprising part of this story is that the whole process was initiated by the ruling party’s very own chief executive. Indeed, Mr Dan Botwe, then Secretary General of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) went on to call on his counterparts in the opposition parties to discuss the Government’s decision, on the same day it was made public. For the ruling party’s Secretary General to rally all other Secretaries General to

discuss a decision of his own party, openly oppose it and seek a collaborative solution with fierce political opponents, was momentous.

The approach in the meeting was to examine the mandate and functions of the Electoral Commission in the establishing law as well as in the Constitution. Discussions were cordial because the Secretaries General agreed with each other that the President’s actions were unconstitutional, and this agreement helped create an atmosphere of camaraderie. The meeting also reached consensus on what they were going to do about it. Nothing in all my years of experience has ever quite demonstrated the spirit and power of multiparty dialogue as that meeting did. How potent the realization that inter-party dialogue could be so instrumental in bringing about needed reforms and in shaping the destiny of our country. It was a major catalyst in our journey towards multiparty dialogue for years to come.

Take-off

Allow me to introduce myself: I am Mrs Jean Mensa, Executive Director of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), home of the Ghana Political Parties Programme (GPPP).

When NIMD first came to Ghana in 2002 to explore the possibility of establishing a multiparty platform, the Electoral Commission and political parties consulted, and expressed confidence in IEA’s ability to host and coordinate the proposed programme. As Ghana’s first public policy centre, the IEA already provided a regular platform for debate and dialogue on pressing national issues related to the economy and governance. We were no stranger to the political parties. Our ability to undertake independent, high quality research and to bring players together across the political divide had earned us a reputation as a neutral, credible and non-partisan institution.

I remember our very first official multiparty programme meeting. Back in 2002, political parties had little experience of meeting together or communicating, let alone of working together across party lines. Thus the first meeting was a landmark occasion as it was in fact the very first time in Ghana’s political history that the leaders of all the political parties were assembled in one room.

It was a bright sunny day, yet inside the IEA conference hall where the meeting took place, the tension was palpable. Party officials looked at each other and at the IEA with reservations and deep suspicion. As the convenor of the meeting, I was just as tense, completely apprehensive about what might happen. I stood at the entrance welcoming party officials as warmly and as bravely as I could, trying to allay some of their anxiety in this way, but all the while, my own legs were quaking.

The shock election results of 2000 that saw the all-powerful National Democratic Congress (NDC) lose to the NPP demonstrated that elections could be lost by any party. Political parties were thus acutely aware of how important it was for them to attend to their own internal affairs as well as to collectively create an enabling environment that would support their survival, whether in or out of power. Although still mistrustful of one another, the parties were also committed to consolidating Ghana's democratic gains. As the meeting progressed, a sense of eagerness emerged in the room, albeit tentative: an eagerness to engage one another in a non-partisan manner, and an eagerness to participate in a programme that would help establish a constructive milieu and platform for multiparty dialogue. This was the state of affairs that served as an important catalyst for the GPPP take-off.

In order to ease the tension and encourage frank discussions at that first formal multiparty meeting, I kept highlighting the important role political parties play in any democracy. I discussed the components of the programme, including the bilateral programmes, and the cross-party platform. I explained that the agenda, structure and rules of engagement for this platform would be drawn up by them if they decided to proceed.

The meeting decided to go ahead. They decided furthermore that the platform should be housed within the IEA, and set up as one of its programmes. We agreed on a name – the Ghana Political Parties Programme – and on a structure: as the Secretaries General were to be the key actors in the programme, we agreed they should form the apex of our pyramid structure. The National Chairpersons, who were to meet monthly to discuss national issues and to diffuse tension and problems that could derail the political process, together with the policy analysts, whose job it was to help parties become policy oriented, would form the middle strata of the pyramid, while Party Coordinators of the programme would form its base. Policy analysts were nominated by the parties and vetted by me to ensure that they had the requisite background that would make them useful to their parties in the areas of research and policy analysis. The various coordinators at the party Secretariats were also appointed to support the smooth running of the programme in the respective parties. During the meeting we also appointed a Secretariat and established membership criteria, and agreed on rules of engagement. These decisions were later drafted into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by each of the political parties and the IEA to ensure commitment and accountability.

Lastly, we discussed the formula for disbursing funds and gave the parties an opportunity to agree among themselves as to how funds should be allocated. Mr Dan Botwe, then Secretary General of the NPP, suggested funds should be disbursed equally, irrespective of a party's strength in Parliament. This unselfish gesture had a big impact on proceedings. The fact that the ruling party, which also had a majority in Parliament, demonstrated such goodwill towards the opposition generated optimism and trust among the parties.

Indeed the whole meeting helped initiate inter-party dialogue and constructive interaction between the political leaders. The tone was thus set for future dialogue and cooperation among the political parties.

Several steps were taken in preparation for this landmark meeting, the most important of which were our consultations with the Electoral Commission and with each of the four political parties involved.

We met with Dr Afari-Djan, Chairman of the Electoral Commission, to brief him on the potential programme, seek his views and obtain his support. Under the Constitution, the Electoral Commission was the key agency that worked directly with political parties. Fortunately for us, Dr Afari-Djan was an advocate of the important role political parties could play in shaping and providing policy alternatives, and he agreed that it was important to develop their capacities. His enthusiasm for the programme spurred us on and we proceeded to set up meetings with each political party. We introduced the programme to the wider executive members and discussed their responses, questions and concerns. These meetings were meant to break the ice, help the leadership of the parties gain clarity on the programme, reassure them there was no hidden agenda and foster interest in the programme and trust in us as the conveners to ensure their attendance at the first formal programme meeting.

The IEA and NIMD also had several meetings where we discussed the modalities, content and operations of the programme as well as the meeting itself. We also investigated Ghana's laws on the financing of political parties to ensure we did not propose anything that violated the country's laws.

Coming to a credible reform agenda

Five years later, in 2007, the GPPP reached another landmark occasion: our Democracy Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP) was successfully incorporated into the National Development Plan and reform agenda. The process that led to this moment was a long one. The GPPP wanted to influence national policy, but needed a clearer picture of the policy landscape in order to begin. The IEA proposed collating and analysing all the parties' position papers on key policy issues developed between 2003 and 2007. The findings were presented in a scoping document which assessed and highlighted the key issues and recommendations proposed by each party. A number of gaps in Ghana's democratic governance had been exposed in the process and these too were included in the report.

Attendees of the first official multiparty programme

The Secretaries General of the four parties with representation in parliament who were in attendance at our first official multiparty meeting were Mr Dan Botwe of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Dr Josiah Ayeah of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Prof Nii Noy Dowuona of the Convention People's Party (CPP) and Mr Gabriel Pwamang of the People's National Convention (PNC). Also in the meeting were two NIMD staff members, Mr Roel von Meijenfeldt, Executive Director, and Mr Mark Dijk, Programme Officer. The IEA was represented by the Executive Director, Mrs Jean Mensa, and Senior Political Scientist, Mr Kwesi Jonah. The meeting was facilitated by the IEA and NIMD.

The next step was to develop a draft strategy paper on Ghana's democracy deficiencies, in order to formulate practical recommendations for reforms, and design a nationwide consultative process that would rally the input and support of the nation. But for this we needed expert assistance. We invited Professors Kwamena Ahwoi and Yaw Twumasi, both renowned academics with political affiliations to the NDC and the NPP respectively, as well as Dr William Ahadzie, who was not directly linked to any party, to work with us. These scholars often produced high quality, independent research work, devoid of partisan bias, and were frequently nominated to present papers on behalf of their parties at the various workshops, symposia and seminars the programme had previously organized. Given these experts' firm grasp of the democratic challenges confronting Ghana, the members of the programme, including those from smaller parties, felt that they could be trusted to be fair, honest and objective in their contributions. It was therefore not difficult to obtain consensus on their selection.

Soon after their appointment, we organized a retreat for both the GPPP members and the experts to discuss and work on a draft strategy paper. The blueprint for a nationwide consultation process was also developed at the retreat. Delegates agreed to include a broad cross section of society, including Ministers of State, Parliament, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, media, women's groups, youth groups, and traditional authorities.

In order to put our emphasis on participation and ownership into practice, we released a publication in the newspapers informing the general public of the process and inviting interested parties to participate in the consultations held in all ten regions of Ghana. The IEA had its list of the two-thousand most influential people in Ghana and we strategically shortlisted seven hundred key individuals we specifically wanted to invite from this list. Next we wrote to all seven hundred, attaching a copy of the draft paper and the consultation programme to the letter. I also met with a number of them in person to stress the fact that their input and support was highly valued.

In addition to the regional consultations, we held separate meetings with each stakeholder group – over ten such meetings in each of the ten regions – to discuss specific sections of the draft paper that related to them. These discussions were lively, interactive and always fruitful. The stakeholders accepted most of the issues raised in the document, shared new insights and added further issues they wanted included.

We also identified key media partners and devised a strategy to obtain extensive coverage of the process in both print and electronic media. This was to ensure that the general public was not only educated on the issues raised, but could also contribute to the discussions through radio and television phone-ins, and the submission of written contributions. Shows at the regional level were conducted in the local dialect so that we could reach as many people as possible. A press briefing was held at the end of each regional consultation to which respected members of the community were invited to share their views.

We relied on parties' regional executive offices to invite the local press, identify venues and deliver invitations. Not only were they an important resource, their active involvement also secured their support for the process and for the paper. We intentionally seated local leaders at the high table and sought their contribution at press briefings. Simple courtesy and recognition helped secure their buy-in.

This wide reaching participation was important in ensuring that the interests of all the various groups within our society were reflected in the whole process, not only the consultations, but at the press briefings and in the final paper as well.

The nationwide consultations were undertaken by two members of the programme and the three experts. The two members selected by the programme were Mr Gabriel Pwamang, the then-Secretary General of the People's National Convention, and Mr Isaac Asiamah, an NPP policy analyst. The selection was straightforward: Mr Pwamang was an astute lawyer with considerable knowledge of Ghana's democratic deficits and issues relating to the 1992 Constitution. Mr Asiamah was a young and equally dynamic member of the programme. A number of rapporteurs also formed part of our team, and they were responsible for recording every meeting and feeding their notes back into the drafting process to ensure the next version reflected citizens' views.

Once the regional consultations were completed, a national workshop was held in Accra. The workshop brought together influential persons from various sectors of society. All the issues in the paper were discussed and the views of those present incorporated into the new draft.

Would I do anything differently next time? If possible, I would do the whole thing much earlier in the election cycle. Although we began a year before elections, the DCSP was only finished and ready to launch just four months before elections. The proximity of our consultation to the 2008 elections definitely influenced the process. For example, the display of affluence by the political parties as part of their campaign process provoked disagreements on the reform proposal about the public funding of political parties. Ghanaians were of the view that political parties should not be given money from the public purse for the elections support.

The timing of our consultation process also coincided with the drafting of political party manifestos thus the process influenced the political discourse at the time. Key reform proposals were reflected in party manifestos and the campaign platforms were used to discuss a number of the proposals contained in the DCSP.

Despite these challenges, our effort secured national consensus on the paper and produced a final draft shaped by the will and aspirations of the people. It also paved the way for the successful adoption of the DCSP into the National Development Plan and reform agenda.

Getting the agenda adopted

No doubt about it, the consultation process we conducted was a key ingredient in ensuring national ownership, knowledge and acceptance of the process and the product. Nationwide consultations, the bi-partisan nature of the paper, arranged interviews and pronouncements by prominent and important stakeholders made it difficult for the Government to ignore the recommendations presented in our paper. The NDC candidate who won the 2008 presidential elections implemented a number of reform proposals contained in the DCSP, including the review of Ghana's Constitution and the passage of the Presidential Transition Bill into law. The Chief Justice instituted the Elections Petitions Tribunal as recommended by the DCSP to ensure a timely determination of all electoral disputes within a year.

I was appointed to serve as a Commissioner at the Constitution Review Commission (CRC). As an experienced head of a policy institute that has a nationwide reputation for independence and objectivity, I knew how to maintain my independence and objectivity while at the same time contributing to the constitution review process. As Commissioner, I organized two weekend retreats to enable GPPP members to prepare their proposals on the various aspects of the Constitution that required reform for presentation to the Commission. After the retreat I called for a meeting between the GPPP and the CRC at the IEA Conference Hall, where these presentations were duly made. Each party addressed a different reform issue. For example, the NDC presented a paper on Independent Governance Institutions while the NPP made a presentation on the Executive and Legislature. The PNC presented a paper on the Judiciary and National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and the CPP's paper addressed decentralization and local government. The various positions presented by representatives of each of the parties were accepted and incorporated into the Commission's final report.

Professor Kwamena Ahowi was appointed as a member of the NDPC, the body responsible for developing the long-term development plan for the country. Mr P. V. Obeng, an influential member of the NDC whom we consulted extensively during the process, was appointed Chairman of the same body.

Several discussions with civil society were organized by the NDPC, to which the IEA was invited. The fact that the proposals contained in the DCSP had been widely discussed and accepted nationwide ensured its acceptance by civil society in the various discussions.

These factors made it easy for the Government and Parliament to incorporate key sections of the DCSP into the National Development Plan and the national budget.

Despite these successes, it has been a long road and there have been times when all of the progress made towards multiparty dialogue and bi-partisanship has been put at risk. Let me recall one of these critical incidents.

A critical moment for the dialogue

Since 2002, GPPP members have met at the end of every year to discuss and agree on the reform agenda for the year ahead. With 2012 being an election year, GPPP members, including the ruling party, decided on an agenda which sought to promote an issues based election, ensure political accountability, calm political tensions and help the voter make an informed decision. To this end members planned to hold two Presidential debates, a Vice-Presidential debate, and four evening encounters with each Presidential candidate. Pleased with our plans, we launched the 2012 reform agenda at a press briefing in February 2012. Two days later, I received a letter from the Office of the President stating: 'We regret to inform you, but the President will not participate in the Presidential debates'.



Presidential debate, from the left: Hon. Nana Addo Dankwah Akuffo-Addo (NPP), Dr. Paa Kwesi Nduom (CPP), President John Evans Atta Mills (NDC) and Dr. Edward Mahama (CPP). 2008

This was a major blow to the GPPP, and to the cooperation and consensus we had enjoyed over the last decade. More immediately, I feared the letter would impact the spirit of the entire debate series. As I anticipated, the President's refusal poured cold water on everyone's enthusiasm: if the President, who is directly accountable to the people, did not participate, why should anyone else?

I tried a number of formal and informal approaches to rescue the situation. I immediately met with the Secretary General and the policy analyst of the NCD to discuss this development and its impact on the programme. They were not aware of the decision or the letter, and were keenly disappointed. However, as this was a decision taken in the Office of the President they felt it would be difficult for them to get the President to change his mind. Despite the bleak prognosis, they promised to take up the issue. Following this discussion, I wrote to the President citing tangible reasons why he should participate, including the fact that by participating, he would be the first President in the history of Ghana to take part in the debate. Unfortunately, I did not receive a reply.

It is important to note that the culture of Presidential debates in Ghana started in the year 2000. That year, H.E. the late Professor John Atta Mills, who was then Ghana's Vice President and the NDC presidential candidate for that election, did not participate; similarly, the victor of the 2000 election, H.E. J.A. Kufuor, did not participate in the 2004 debates.

Despite the odds, we continued to call influential personalities to try to convince the President and his team of the importance of the debates. They all promised to do their best. Mr P.V. Obeng, one of the influential persons within the NDC, suggested that I write to the President's Chief of Staff to seek audience with him. Sadly, we never received a response to this letter either.

Refusing to give up, the IEA's nine-member Presidential debates committee, made up of eminent Ghanaians who had distinguished themselves in public and private life, met with the Executive Members of the NDC at the party headquarters. At this meeting, we tried to convince them of the importance of the debates, and they too promised to do their best to ensure the President's participation. We also held meetings with the leadership of the other political parties to convince them to participate, even in the event of the President's absence.

Throughout these attempts, the IEA Secretariat continued to release statements and engage the press on various aspects of the debates. This aroused public interest and strengthened the call for accountability on the part of those who wished to govern. Some social and political commentators condemned the ruling party for its decision not to participate in the event. The media contacted the IEA Secretariat for our response to the stance taken by the ruling party. During all of our discussions, the IEA was careful not to antagonize the ruling party. Instead, we used every opportunity to stress the importance of the debates in promoting accountability and encouraged the ruling party to reconsider its decision.

In July of 2012, the President passed away and his Vice President, H.E. John Mahama, was sworn in as President. This provided a fortuitous opportunity for us to engage the new President and his team. We wrote to the President to congratulate him on his swearing-in, and followed up a week later with a letter formally inviting him to

participate in the debate series. We also paid him a courtesy call and used the occasion to stress the importance of the debate. The breakthrough came when I received a call from the President's Chief of Staff one Sunday evening: 'The President has agreed to participate,' he said. A subsequent meeting with the party's Secretary General, other party officials and representatives of the President crystallized the arrangements for the President's participation in the debates.

I firmly believe the reason we were able to facilitate a breakthrough was due to the meetings, both formal and informal, with influential persons in the Government. This helped to keep the lines of communication open at all times. Our constant engagement with the press also helped whip up public interest in the debate and led to sections of society calling on the President to participate in the debates. We continued to work with the governing party and the rest of the parties on other equally important national issues. Indeed, the then-Vice President, President John Mahama, had been the keynote speaker at a significant event organized by us to commemorate the passage of the Presidential Transition Bill into Law. The event brought together high level officials of the ruling party including Cletus Avoka, who was the party's Majority Leader in Parliament, Kwamena Ahwoi, and P.V. Obeng, among a host of other high ranking party figures. And it sent a positive signal to the nation that the IEA enjoyed good relations with the ruling party despite the latter's stance on the Presidential debate. This made it easier for the Government to rescind its decision in the face of fierce public criticism and condemnation.

Reflections and conclusion

I can confidently say that Ghana has benefited from the inter-party dialogue process; simply put, the process has played a major role in the consolidation of multiparty democracy in Ghana. Before the process, political parties were hostile and antagonistic towards each other. It was unthinkable for party representatives to be seen together, let alone work together. The inter-party dialogue process introduced in 2002 changed that. Today it is common to see political parties working together and taking a common position on issues. Today it is common to witness political party representatives working on policies and bills under the aegis of the GPPF. Typical examples of their collective effort include the Presidential Transition Act, the Right to Information Act, the Political Parties Bill, the Political Parties Funding Bill and the Constitution Review Process. These initiatives have helped to further consolidate Ghana's democracy.

Inter-party dialogue and the need to maintain it is ingrained in the political psyche of the Ghanaian political elites and also the masses. In this regard, it is worth noting that although one of the political parties of the GPPF is petitioning the declaration of John Mahama as the elected President of the Republic of Ghana in the Supreme Court, inter-party dialogue is still ongoing. Monthly caucus and platform meetings are still

being held; round-table discussions have been organized; and statements have been issued about the need for electoral reforms. Again, the parties under the auspices of the GPPP have called on their supporters to restrain themselves and not to do anything that might sacrifice the peace of the country when the Supreme Court delivers its verdict on the election petition.

Political parties see the current situation in Ghana as an opportunity to work together to ensure a thorough review of the nation's electoral system. Contrary to the fear that the election petition could harm inter-party dialogue, the evidence shows that the parties are gearing up to work together even more intensely on issues of electoral reforms in the nation's best interest and for their own future benefit.

The IEA-GPPP owes its success to several factors, some of which are outlined below:

1. The IEA's credibility and partnerships

The IEA is an independent and non partisan institute which has over the years nurtured strategic relationships with policy makers including Members of Parliaments, Ministers and the Presidency. Our periodic circulation of IEA Governance Newsletters, Legislative Alerts, Policy Analysis and other publications to the 2000 most influential people in Ghana has helped us develop strong partnerships that enable policy makers to buy into IEA-GPPP initiatives. As a facilitator, I have also maintained my credibility as a politically neutral person, and the IEA conference centre, used as the venue for monthly GPPP meetings, continues to be seen as neutral and safe.

2. Pioneering role of NIMD

There can be no meaningful reflection on the successes of the IEA-GPPP without talking about the pioneering role of NIMD in facilitating the political reforms and dialogue process in Ghana. Although political parties were a bit apprehensive about their interest and intention initially, I managed to convince them that NIMD had no agenda, except to partner them in promoting political dialogue and deepening democracy in Ghana.

3. Programme role-players

I have nurtured a very committed and highly motivated staff at the IEA Secretariat, who provide both the intellectual research and administrative backbone of the programme. The programme's Advisory Council must be acknowledged too. The Council is made up of very seasoned politicians and civic leaders carefully selected from academia, political parties and civil society. Their role is akin to that of the Ghanaian Traditional Council of Elders who constantly offer wise counsel, advice and suggestions to chiefs. Given the level of respect accorded them in the country and across the political divide, their views and counsel are easily accepted as binding. The political parties themselves have also been committed to the programme. The Secretaries General, policy analysts and National Chairpersons have all made invaluable contributions to its success. As respected senior statesmen, the National Chairpersons were able to prevent domestic

flashpoints from turning nasty. Indeed, they played a crucial role in diffusing the long standing chieftaincy dispute in the Dagbon traditional area in the Northern Region of Ghana. If it was not for their proactive role in meeting and talking to the combatants, the Dagbon conflict could have derailed the peace and political process in Ghana.

4. Serving as an example and learning from others

We shared the process and impact of the GPPP with other West African countries under the aegis of the West African Regional Political Parties' Programme (WARPPP) between 2004 and 2007. This programme provided an opportunity for Ghanaian political leaders to meet with their West African counterparts to discuss inter-party dialogue, share lessons and brainstorm on other issues of regional concern that undermine democratic quality.

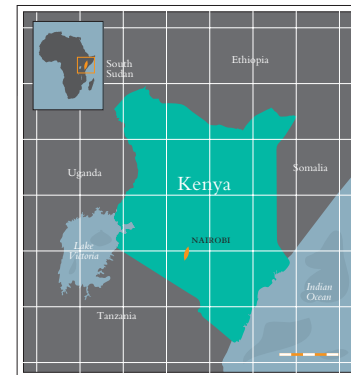
One issue in relation to the quality of democracy, and one on which Ghana is not the shining example in Africa, is gender balance. This has been an issue that has been the subject of regular discussions within the GPPP over the years. As I reflect on how the GPPP has worked to promote inter-party dialogue, I remain convinced that democratic governance in Ghana would be enhanced if we learn from our counterparts who have excelled in the areas of promoting inclusivity and gender balance in decision making.

I can confidently state that Ghana has benefited from the inter-party dialogue process. Indeed the nation's relative peace, stability and tranquillity can be partly explained by the fact that those who could have been combatants are always at the dialogue table discussing national issues and ways to move the nation forward under the auspices of the IEA-GPPP.

Jean Mensa

Executive Director of the Institute of Economic Affairs and Ghana Political Parties Programme

Kenya's political landscape



When Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963 it enjoyed multiparty democracy, with the Kenya African National Union (KANU) as frontrunner. The bliss of multiparty politics was soon to end, however: in 1969 the country became a de facto one party state, with key opposition leaders arrested and detained without trial. The situation worsened in June 1982, when the National Assembly declared a one party state by amending the law. This state of affairs lasted for close to ten years before Parliament annulled the one party section of the Constitution in December 1991.

The 2002 general elections were the third multiparty elections since the removal of section 2A from the Constitution. Despite multiparty elections in 1992 and 1997, it took the efforts of a number of Kenyan political parties coming together under the umbrella of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) to finally rid the nation of what was globally perceived as a KANU dictatorship.

Kenyan political parties are fairly new and are viewed as parties of personalities rather than parties that espouse a particular ideology. Indeed, Kenyan political parties, consistently resist change and the path towards democratic and well governed political institutions. This has continually affected our political growth as a country, but through major efforts by a few politicians in partnership with civil society organizations under the umbrella of the Coalition for Accountable Political Financing (CAPF) and the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya (CMD-Kenya), the Political Parties Act 2007 (PPA) was enacted and implementation began with the registration of 'new' political parties in 2008. A new law was further enacted in 2011 following of a new constitution in August 2010. Since then at least sixty political parties have been registered under the new law.

Although political parties form a cornerstone of the political, social and economic growth of countries, steady development has eluded Kenya due to the fluidity and lack of ideological leaning of parties. In the last three elections the political parties that have taken power have all been less than one year old. In 2002, NARC was formed with the purpose of getting rid of KANU; in 2007 the Party of National Unity was created with the purpose of keeping Mwai Kibaki in power; and in 2012, the National Alliance Party was created to push Uhuru Kenyatta to the presidency.

Since 2004, CMD-Kenya has continued to push for the institutionalization of political parties so that they can play their rightful role in society, namely participating in good democratic governance which will propel the nation to political, economic and social development.



by Njeri Kabeberi

Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya

Kenya: “Dialogue is not one more way, it is the only way”

Njeri Kabeberi has worked in the non-state sector at a regional, national, and international level for two decades. Prior to working as the founding Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya and as country co-ordinator for NIMD, she coordinated development work at Amnesty International’s East and Southern Africa Regional Office, then based in Pretoria, South Africa. Ms Kabeberi has repeatedly put her life on the line in the struggle for justice, democracy and human rights in Kenya and other parts of Africa. She is an outstanding leader and human rights defender whose work is exemplified by her leadership roles in organizations such as the Citizens Coalition for Constitutional Change, Release Political Prisoners Pressure Group, the Kenya Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International and Kenyans for Peace, Truth and Justice. Ms Kabeberi has been awarded three international awards; the inaugural ‘Humanity Award’ by the Frankfurt am Main Chamber of Lawyers, for ‘Commitment to Law and Justice’; the ‘Democracy Ribbon’ (International Section) by the City of The Hague, for ‘Commitment to Peace and Democracy’; and the ‘ILO Wedge Award 2010’ given by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Women’s Entrepreneurship Development, in recognition for her work to increase women’s rights in Kenya.

At dusk on 30 December 2007, the Electoral Commission of Kenya declared the incumbent, H. E. President Mwai Kibaki, the winner of the 2007 general elections, amid nationwide protests and claims of election rigging. In a flash, both spontaneous and 'planned' violence erupted, a violence characterized by its speed, spread and ruthlessness.² It continued for months, most acutely in the first fifty-nine days, leaving citizens traumatized, several hundreds of thousands injured, raped, or evicted from their homes, and over one thousand Kenyans dead. This burning, maiming and killing has since been categorized as crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court.

Despite a political history marred by intolerance, violence and single party rule, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya (CMD), launched in 2004, had successfully brought political rivals together in cordial multiparty dialogue and cooperative endeavours for years. Now, within hours of the Electoral Commission's announcement, we were in a totally polarized situation and all our work seemed to be coming apart. Political parties wasted no time in siding with either Mwai Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU), or Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), both of which claimed the election had been stolen. In plain words, our members were warring with each other.

If you take a general election as the main test of pursuing multiparty democracy, then the very existence of CMD–Kenya and everything we stood for had never been more threatened, nor more needed.

The litmus test of dialogue

With no Government representatives or opposition members seemingly interested in stopping the violence, it became a race against time for ordinary Kenyans to respond to the urgent mission of saving our nation. On 2 January 2008 my phone rang: it was my cousin David Kabeberi, a leader in the financial sector.

'We have to meet,' he said. 'We have to do something, Njeri. With your civil society contacts and my business ones, surely we can come up with a plan to help mitigate the situation?!'

Nairobi, like many other parts of the country, was on fire: bloodshed, road blocks, burning and general destruction. Just stepping outside your own house was a risk that many would say was not worth taking. As I made my way through the carnage to the

Jacaranda Hotel to meet David, my mind flipped back to other meetings that had taken place there, including the first bilateral consultations with political parties that led to the formation of CMD–Kenya. These had been meetings filled with optimism and promise. I knew, whatever the risk, I could not give up on that promise now.

David and I agreed to meet daily and rally our respective troops to join us. We needed to marshal enough people in both his network and mine to pursue an effective course of action. Not only did I need to call on fellow human rights activists and other civil society colleagues, I also had to consider how I, as Executive Director of CMD–Kenya, was going to call warring political leaders into one room.

Given that the violence was affecting movement everywhere in the country and that staff would be exposed to risk, I doubted the CMD–Kenya office would open again after the Christmas holidays. But on 7 January, even those staff members who had to travel through the difficult Rift Valley were in the office. To this day, the memory of seeing them all there at nine o'clock in the morning brings tears to my eyes. If ever I had doubted their commitment to our work, that doubt was instantaneously erased. Later when I asked why they had chosen to come to work, they said they had seen me on television calling for peace, and they knew I needed them in the office. It seemed that, through these media appearances, I had not only voiced an alternative direction for Kenyans, but had by extension also activated those both directly and remotely connected to me.

The structures of CMD–Kenya included a Steering Committee, which met monthly, an Oversight Board, which met quarterly, and the Annual General Meeting, which met once a year. With the office now fully functional, it was members of the Oversight Board I called to a meeting. From the outset it was imperative CMD–Kenya did not take sides with either of the two warring parties. That is why the agenda I prepared for this meeting only addressed matters of direct concern to Kenya – and not necessarily the parties. While the agenda seemed safe, it could of course not protect us from the enmity between members. The board room where we met was alight with fury, each party representative hurling insults at the other. Although they had deigned to come to the meeting, it wasn't dialogue they wanted: one side wanted their vote back, while the other wanted to stay in power – period! Every experience I had ever gone through, and every skill I had ever learned in life, came into play for the second time since the start of CMD–Kenya. It took an enormous amount of energy, tact and skill to calm the political party representatives enough for sensible conversation to take place.

The most important decision reached that day was to continue holding Board meetings on a daily basis. Within the first week of Board meetings, the members took another important decision, this time endorsing the intervention of the African Union (AU) as mediator. As our meetings continued, tempers cooled and members began to see the need for dialogue. Because of the volatile situation, rules were relaxed and Board members were allowed to bring their legal teams and others from their parties with them. We had

to put a limit on attendees, not because they were ‘strangers’ in the house, but because our boardroom was not that big. It’s important to understand that only eight individuals from two political parties/coalitions sat at the mediation table, four of them representing the Party of National Unity (PNU) of President Kibaki and its affiliates and the other four representing the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party of Raila Odinga.

Apart from its work with political parties, CMD-Kenya also formally engaged with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) under two umbrella structures: the Kenyans for Peace, Truth and Justice (KPTJ), and the National Civic Society Congress (NCSC). I was at the meeting that first conceived KPTJ and was instrumental in reviving the NCSC at this critical time. Other key networks included a women’s organization called Vital Voices, the national trade union movement (COTU) and Jua Kali sector, a group of artisans from the informal sector. Vital Voices aimed to add women’s voices to the call for unity and peace. This group worked under the guidance of Ms Boudouine Kamatari, a survivor of the Burundian genocide who had worked with the United Nations during the war in DR Congo, as well as in Rwanda. Boudouine patiently and consistently urged us to keep the voice of women alive and to insist that ‘dialogue is not one more way, it is the only way.’ Thank you, Boudouine.

As the AU mediation took root under the leadership of Kofi Annan, a combined team of CSO leaders and myself as Executive Director of CMD-Kenya met at seven o’clock every morning at the Serena Hotel (it became known as the House of Peace) to review the previous day’s activities. Based on these reflections we then prepared a position paper for the mediation team every morning and lobbied Kofi Annan directly. I believe these interventions shaped the mediation discussions along the way. Kofi Annan himself commended civil society interventions and cited them in several of his subsequent speeches.

Over these first hectic days that blurred into months, I shuttled back and forth between CMD-Kenya Board members, my civil society friends, fellow women leaders, development partners and media appearances. I had never moved so much, worked such long hours or talked to so many people in such a short span of time. Through tears and sleepless nights, I knew in my mind and in my heart of hearts that this was a race against time and that everything depended on how swiftly and strategically certain things were put in place. I had to use every skill I had, every contact, every friend and every foe that I could get hold of, to help put some action in place to save our country. Many other Kenyans were doing the same thing; sometimes our paths met, other times not. But I knew I wasn’t alone and that the most important thing I could do was to play my role, do my best and keep moving. I knew I could only stop once this ‘war’ was over. Even so, there were many times that I cried alone in my car, or in my house. These were times I thought I had reached the end of the road – yet the killings were intensifying. One day while driving home listening to the radio, I heard that the killings had reached Naivasha, just an hour away from Nairobi. I knew if the killings reached the capital, we would never save the country and Kenya would turn into another Somalia. I screamed the rest of the way home

and cried myself to sleep that night. Everything looked totally hopeless. Although I woke re-energized and ready to go again next morning, worse was still to come.

At the height of the crisis, at least twelve Kenyans from the Kikuyu community were issued with death threats by members of their own community for supporting the way of peace and demanding truth and justice. My name was on that list of twelve. Despite opportunities to leave the country, I chose to stay. Despite the danger posed to my colleagues, they chose to stick with me. We worked even harder than before, as indeed it seemed our days were numbered.

When the rival parties signed the National Peace Accord on 28 February 2008, we all heaved a huge sigh of relief, although we knew the danger had not passed, and that our work was not yet over. I can confidently say that during this critical time for our nation, my personal efforts and interventions, and those of CMD-Kenya as an organization through its Board members, made a significant contribution to the peace process. Why? Four contributing factors come to mind. First, the dedication and tireless effort of CMD staff and the support from our international colleagues, especially Roel von Meijenfeldt, who frequently comforted and encouraged me, and served as a valuable online sounding board throughout the crisis. Both he and Jasper Veen, the then NIMD Africa Director, visited us at the height of the crisis, dodging tear gas and protesting crowds in the city of Nairobi to do so. Second, CMD-Kenya is exceptionally well networked. This is not limited to political parties, and in fact it was our connections within civil society which proved to be invaluable. Third, women are often viewed as ‘soft’ negotiators, which allowed me to lobby on several fronts. Fourth, CMD-Kenya has a track record of multi-party dialogue and a membership structure that works – even in times of crisis.

In the next section I examine the makings of this structure, our Centre for Multiparty Democracy, more fully, highlighting some of the key components and events in our history that have helped us become an effective and a sustainable organization.

The formation and life of CMD-Kenya

Prior to working at CMD-Kenya, I worked at the regional office of Amnesty International in Pretoria, South Africa. The office was situated within the Kutlwana Democracy Centre, owned by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), and it was there that I met its Directors, Paul Graham and Ivor Jenkins, who became instrumental in CMD-Kenya’s earliest phase.

I had lived and worked outside my homeland for eight years and, following its ‘first’ free and fair elections in as many decades since independence, I was anxious to return home to Kenya. During my stay in South Africa, I had witnessed the crumbling of many CSOs which had been unable to redefine their role in the new dispensation and I feared the

same might happen in my own country. With the help of Ivor and Paul, I put together an ambitious proposal on the Sustainability and Institutionalization of CSOs under the new democratic political order. In our search for donors, IDASA forwarded the proposal to NIMD. NIMD responded positively but said its core business was supporting political parties. If I could apply my proposal to political parties rather than CSOs, we could enter a partnership. And so I did.

There was an initial series of meetings between myself, IDASA and NIMD's representatives to discuss the idea in detail. We then undertook an important consultative trip to Kenya to meet with political party and civil society leaders there. My job was to contact Secretaries General, prepare and provide a brief on the meeting and do all the logistical preparations. Secretaries General and officials from each of the registered political parties with at least one Member of Parliament (but also some parties with Councillors only) were invited to meet with us at the Jacaranda Hotel to discuss the potential programme. The response was, for the most part, enthusiastic. Parties seemed both excited and anxious at the prospect of having a programme which focused on their institutional well-being, something they had long envied civil society for having. The majority welcomed the idea and indicated that they looked forward to continuing discussions. Many parties I had not even heard of before contacted me directly and asked to be included in the consultations. There were, however, parties who did not like the idea at all. For example, the Liberal Democratic Party (LPD) of Professor Larry Gumbe, who would later become the third Chairperson of CMD-Kenya, was very hostile initially and the meeting with that party stands out in my mind as being particularly unpleasant. Since then I have had a superb relationship with Professor Gumbe in his two terms as Chairperson of CMD-Kenya.

Despite the high level of cooperation and enthusiasm, I must admit here that some of the meetings were very challenging, not because the parties were difficult, but because of the political ideologies and contradictory roles played by different actors. For example KANU, which was the independence party in Kenya, had over the years abandoned its nationalist agenda and become a dictatorship. In addition, its Secretary General, Julius ole Sunkuli, had a number of serious cases against him pending in court, including charges of rape and murder. As a member of the Kenyan regional and international human rights movement, this was my first big test of neutrality and non-partisanship: I had to treat KANU the same way I treated other parties, and Julius ole Sunkuli like any other Secretary General.

During the second set of meetings – which included a large NIMD delegation made up of the Executive Director, Roel von Meijenfheldt, the Programme Manager for Kenya, Marcus Lens van Rijn, and two NIMD Board members, Senator Jos van Gennip and former Ambassador Jone Bos, whom we fondly referred to as the 'Grandfathers of Democracy' – NIMD decided to work directly in Kenya. IDASA's support and intervention was amicably wrapped up, and we turned our attention to our first multiparty meetings. Minutes show that formal meetings between all the parties began as early as February

2004, with different parties offering to host the joint inter-party forum meetings in their office space. These meetings were, with the odd exception, held every month. They were intense and not always smooth, but decisions were reached on almost everything that has become the CMD-Kenya we know today. Most of our early energies went into establishing our structure. Despite the good example of the Ghanaian equivalent, the Ghana Political Parties Programme – which is housed in the Institute for Economic Affairs, shared with us by its Executive Director, Mrs Jean Mensa – parties did not want to fall under a CSO. They wanted to deal directly with NIMD, and decided to register as a Trust instead. Our Trust comprises five main structures: the Steering Committee, an Oversight Board, the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Standing and ad hoc Committees and an independent Secretariat. The roles, obligations and responsibilities of each of these structures are set out in the Trust Deed. Although I already held the position of NIMD Country Coordinator, the political parties agreed that I should be appointed Executive Director. I therefore played the Secretariat roles and provided the relevant intellectual, strategic and logistical support.

Together we put mechanisms in place towards the preparation of a Strategic Plan and a Code of Conduct to accompany the Trust Deed. Our Strategic Plan outlined our vision as follows: 'To promote the institutionalization of vibrant and democratic political parties capable of enhancing and perpetuating multiparty democracy in Kenya.' Our mission is 'To facilitate the growth of and perpetuate multiparty democracy through the capacity building of political member parties in Kenya.'

Both the Trust Deed and the Strategic Plan discussed bilateral and cross-party funding and laid out the formula for fund distribution at the very outset. In later years, this formula was shared with the Registrar of Political Parties which then tailored its own funds distribution formula on the original CMD-Kenya bilateral funding formula. In this manner, CMD-Kenya served as a laboratory for political party funding regulation that would subsequently be introduced in the country.

When it came to choosing a name, Professor Amukowa Anangwe, a political scientist and lecturer at the Nairobi University who was to be our very first Chairperson, suggested the Centre for Multiparty Democracy-Kenya.

The pending launch of CMD-Kenya became the big motivation for the finalization of these various documents. A launch committee was established, a budget set and a public relations firm hired to organize the whole event on our behalf. The launch committee targeted 500–600 invitees including President Kibaki. As Kenya is a fairly religious nation, religious leaders were identified and asked to offer prayers. Entertainment was decided on and the CMD-Kenya logo designed. Media activities were taken seriously to ensure good coverage both pre- and post-event. On reflection I think the four-month-long preparation process was as important as the launch itself, particularly as people bonded while so busy and excited getting ready for the great day.

And a great day it was. The launch was finally held on 17 September 2004 at the Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi. It was a defining moment for CMD-Kenya because this was the occasion during which all the documents were signed in a show of commitment to our vision and mission. The Trust Deed and Strategic Plan were launched as well as a Code of Conduct which set out the rules of engagement between parties, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which set out the terms of engagement with NIMD. The signing of this MOU meant that a select number of parties would receive bilateral funding for the very first time in Kenya. The event was full of pomp and big speeches from party leaders, invited guests and NIMD representatives. Everyone was in high spirits and on their best behaviour – possibly because of the extensive media coverage we were getting, or perhaps because no-one wanted to jeopardize the bilateral funding, or maybe just because the promise of multiparty democracy was so enticing.

After the launch I knew there was no going back. Clearly parties felt they owned the programme, and they also made a significant statement by adopting the various documents presented at the launch. While independent of each other, this meant parties were willing to submit themselves to a set of rules that would guide their relationship with each other.

Since that day, parties' interest in CMD-Kenya has grown by leaps and bounds. CMD-Kenya stands out as the premier political and governance organization in the country. Three years after the launch, the Political Parties Act of 2007 was enacted. This law forbade political parties from receiving any bilateral funding from an external (foreign) donor. Surprisingly, this has not affected CMD-Kenya's membership at all. In fact there were twenty-nine member parties at our ninth AGM held in June 2013. This is the highest number of member parties since the start of the organization. At the time of writing we also have seven international partners and a host of local partners.

The statutory structures of CMD-Kenya have held their meetings according to the Trust Deed and accompanying by-laws consistently and without fail during the last nine years, despite political turmoil. My continued role as head of the Secretariat has been to make sure that the organization runs according to its rules and procedures. The Secretariat, although an independent organ, gives its total support to the CMD-Kenya structures by making sure they implement the Board decisions and report back to the Board on a quarterly basis as they do to the Steering Committee on a monthly basis and to the AGM annually. The structured system and process that is CMD-Kenya has led one or two senior Government officers to quip: 'Are you running an alternative Government here?'

One of our biggest recent achievements is the role CMD-Kenya played in the constitutional reform process described in the following section.



Handing over the CMD-Kenya legal instruments from Hon. JB Muturi (now Speaker of the National Assembly) to the new chairperson Hon. Omingo Magara in the presence of both their vice chairs. June 2013

Constitutional reform in Kenya

It was the single most exciting political and national event since independence from Britain in 1963, and indeed one of our proudest moments ... a new Constitution! Kenyans returned home from all over the world to join their brothers and sisters voting in the 3 August 2010 referendum, and again they returned, even more triumphantly on 26 August 2010, to finally witness the promulgation of our new Constitution.

Despite a multitude of factors – including several attempts to push a number of constitutional drafts and amendments through Parliament; high level advocacy; demonstrations that resulted in injury and death; President Kibaki's 2002 campaign promise to deliver a new Constitution within one hundred days in office; the 2005 referendum; and the 2007–08 political crisis which many attributed to the lack of constitutional review – despite all of this, a new Constitution eluded Kenya until 2010.

I had been involved in the demand for a new Constitution for at least eighteen years and it was natural for CMD-Kenya to take up the issue too. Fortunately the clamour for a new Constitution was so high on the majority of Kenyans' agenda that getting the political parties on board was a smooth process.

CMD-Kenya member parties took different positions in the 2005 constitutional referendum, supporting either the Banana campaign (representing yes) or the Orange campaign (representing no). In order to remain non-partisan, CMD-Kenya focused on electorate education and awareness, organizing for leaders of our member parties to record their campaign messages and have them broadcast on national radio and television. Five years later, only one out of twenty-seven member parties supported the No campaign, and our Oversight Board therefore decided to lobby for the Yes campaign.

A Committee of Experts (COE) sworn in during March 2009 as required by the Constitution of Kenya Review Act 2008 spearheaded a completely new process of constitutional reform. Making the most of the Act's provisions for public participation, and the Board's decision to lobby for the Yes campaign, CMD-Kenya fully participated in the process. We hired consultants to analyse the proposed content of the new Constitution at different times and presented these analyses to Board members. We also used this information to educate our members across party lines, and across the country. Our Board members engaged with the COE directly, presenting proposals on several issues. In addition we supported women, young people, persons with disabilities and the super minorities through our inclusivity programme. The majority of these positions found their way into the new Constitution. Furthermore, the CMD-Kenya made extensive use of the media, especially during the last month of the campaign. Media messages were pre-recorded and given to radio and television stations, while live talk shows were blocked to the extent that CMD-Kenya presented panellists to nearly every television station and undertook to look for those with opposing views. This constant media work was the last straw that broke the camel's back. But it was all worth it, of course, when our new, long-awaited Constitution was finally promulgated. This time my tears were tears of joy.

A platform of equals

Looking back over the years, I would say that having agreed structures and processes from the very beginning really helped CMD-Kenya work as effectively as it has. The Trust Deed held our members together and helped them take appropriate action even when the organization or the country was in turmoil. Our rules and code of conduct served as a constant reminder that the Centre is a platform of equals.

Of course not everything that makes a multiparty forum function well can be formalized in rules, systems and procedures. There is a range of other important contributing factors, including the role of the Executive Director. Despite political parties' own commitment to the process, I believe I was the glue that kept everyone together during the initial stages of the forum. I was the vision carrier who reminded them of the long term goal, I continuously clarified the agenda, I helped mitigate conflict and I kept diligent records so that we remained on course. My former experience in working for a membership organization helped me find constructive ways to deal with the different

individual and party interests, perspectives and incentives, and to forge these into one mutually acceptable agenda. This of course is an Executive Director's job, but I realize now that every experience in life counts, and that you never know when it will come in handy for the next assignment, job or life experience.

It has become obvious to Kenyans that the joint voice of political parties is stronger than the voice of one party, even if that one party is the ruling party. Dialogue, we have learned, is not one more way, it is the only way.

Njeri Kabeberi

Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Kenya

¹⁹ The Waki Commission (officially, the Commission of Inquiry on the Post Election Violence, or CIPEV) chaired by Justice Philip Waki, found that at least 20 individuals were likely culpable of organising and/or masterminding the 2008 post-election violence and in turn recommended that they either be charged in a Special Tribunal for Kenya or, if that were not possible, that their cases be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) so as to bring justice to the over 1,000 dead and close to 600,000 internally displaced people.

Malawi's political landscape

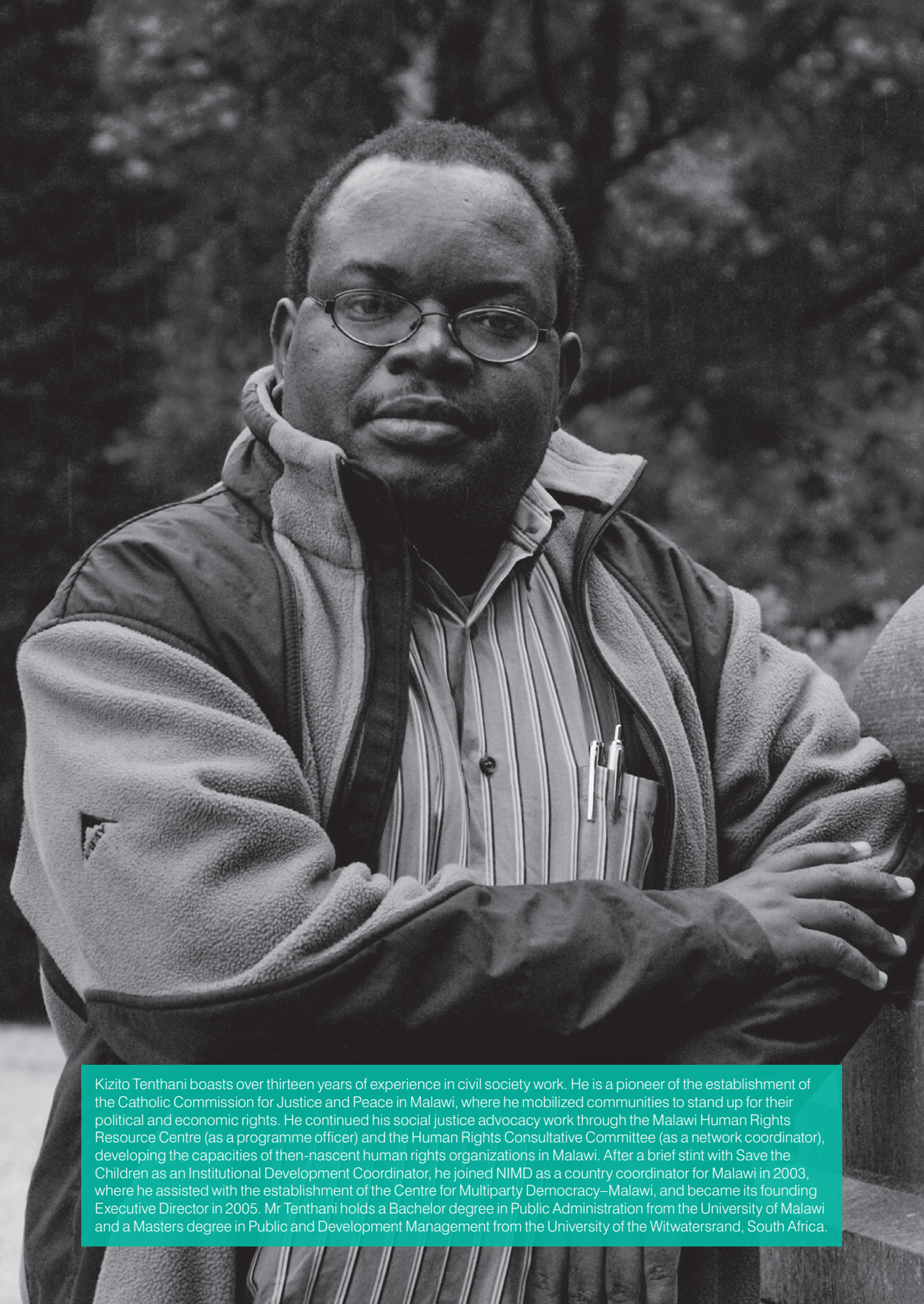


1992 marked a significant milestone in the political history of Malawi. After almost three decades of single party rule, civil agitation and pressure on the regime – from both within and outside the country – reached a level that the regime could no longer ignore. In a referendum held in June 1993, the question put to Malawians was whether they wished to continue with a one party state or embrace multiparty democracy. The answer was clear: Malawians wanted democracy.

The referendum was followed by democratic, multiparty elections, held in May 1994. Three parties won seats in the National Assembly: the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) – the former ruling party – and the United Democratic Front (UDF). Although the MCP won the highest number of parliamentary seats, the UDF won the presidential election, and therefore formed Government.

Since these momentous political changes of the 1990s, political parties have operated as single, intolerant and antagonistic entities. The rivalry between them has often led to inter-party violence that threatened the very foundations of our nascent democratic order. Violence reached alarming proportions in the second multiparty elections of 1999. This was partially due to the fracturing of political parties into splinter parties, all of which were competing for the same constituencies.

In 2002, in an effort to reduce spiralling inter-party violence and rivalry, five political parties met with NIMD on several occasions in Lilongwe to discuss possible cross-party partnership in pursuit of the promotion of democracy. The parties involved included AFORD, MCP, UDF, the Malawi Democratic Party (MDP), and the Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (MAFUNDE).



by Kizito Tentani

Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Malawi

Malawi: From ad hoc committee to influential institution

Kizito Tentani boasts over thirteen years of experience in civil society work. He is a pioneer of the establishment of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Malawi, where he mobilized communities to stand up for their political and economic rights. He continued his social justice advocacy work through the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (as a programme officer) and the Human Rights Consultative Committee (as a network coordinator), developing the capacities of then-nascent human rights organizations in Malawi. After a brief stint with Save the Children as an Institutional Development Coordinator, he joined NIMD as a country coordinator for Malawi in 2003, where he assisted with the establishment of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Malawi, and became its founding Executive Director in 2005. Mr Tentani holds a Bachelor degree in Public Administration from the University of Malawi and a Masters degree in Public and Development Management from the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

I cannot pinpoint exactly how and why I was selected to head the process of establishing a multiparty platform in Malawi, nor can I tell you who took the very first steps in bringing political parties and NIMD together some ten years ago. But I can tell you what has happened since those early days. I can tell you about our journey from an ad hoc committee to a fully-fledged, influential institution. I can tell you about the work behind the scenes which has made it possible for warring political parties to not only establish this institution, but to collaboratively bring about democratic reform. And I'd like to tell you about these things through the lens of my own experience. I'd like to share some of the lessons I have learned from these past ten years as Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Malawi.

Breakthrough

Way back in 2002, Malawi's five key political parties pushed past the antagonism between them to work on a joint response to NIMD's offer of assistance in building multiparty cooperation. Perhaps this feat was possible because of the leadership of Hon. Kate Kainja, Secretary General, and Jodder Kanjere, Administrative Secretary, both of the MCP who chaired the process; or perhaps because of the skilled facilitation by Professor Zimani Kadzamira; or perhaps because parties had already had a taste of multiparty dialogue with the Danish Centre for Human Rights? Whatever it was that contributed to this remarkable collaboration, it was primarily due to a common concern among all parties about the political violence which rocked Malawi in the build-up to the 1999 elections and which continued to threaten the country's fragile democracy.

NIMD's offer came as a result of their two fact finding and relationship building missions in Malawi. The missions included bilateral meetings with parties to assess readiness for a multiparty dialogue platform, and consultations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and members of the international diplomatic community, including Germany, the United Kingdom, USAID and the European Union. Although at the time I worked for the Human Rights Consultative Conference and Save the Children, I accompanied the NIMD representatives during these missions and was introduced to all political parties as the focal point and liaison with NIMD. Between our preparations and Hon Kainja's cross-party committee, enough ground work was done to prepare for the first formal multiparty meeting.

It was 30 October 2003, my first official day on the job. Senior politicians from ruling and opposition parties, both those with representation in Parliament and those without,

filled the conference venue at Murika, an exclusive club in Blantyre. From the sidelines, I could feel the volatility, distrust and uneasiness among delegates. There was fear that the stronger parties, like the MCP and the UDF, would run away with the initiative and use it to dominate or even swallow the smaller parties. There were contentions. There was hostility. Yet there was also a strong sense of anticipation and commitment. During the course of the two-day meeting, we reflected on our situation, and identified major political challenges that Malawi was facing. These included political and electoral violence, intra- and inter-party intolerance, gender inequalities in politics, the tendency to focus on personalities rather than issues in politics, and inadequate civic education on the tenets of democracy and the electoral process. The meeting also discussed bilateral party support from NIMD, and the potential for a multiparty platform.

Towards the end of this meeting a breakthrough moment was reached: delegates formed a multiparty committee with the aim of promoting cross-party dialogue, which in turn would aim to address some of the challenges listed. What remained after this major decision was the mechanics of actually setting up the multiparty dialogue platform. Before describing this process, I'd like to reflect on the meeting's real significance which, with the benefit of hindsight, has become more apparent to me. Not only was it a first for Malawi, but the way it was conducted, how it unfolded and what it produced was crucial for the work that followed. Two things stand out as particularly important.

First, the meeting was important because it set the tone for future multiparty relationships. It brought sensitivities to the fore so that they could be identified and discussed. These sensitivities included the possible dominance of some parties, and the possibility of some parties ganging up against others, such as the opposition parties against the ruling party.

Second, the meeting also helped political parties appreciate and accept the role of neutral facilitators such as Professor Kadzamira and myself. What was critically important at that time was the emphasis on neutrality. It assisted to foster trust in the process itself and among the political parties involved. The role of Professor Kadzamira was to assist political parties to reflect on the broad challenges that were identified, like political violence, and design an intervention that would ensure we dealt with the problems. Apart from providing the secretarial support and linkage between NIMD and the political parties, my role also involved providing the space for political parties to continue to interact and operationalize, as well as the technical back-stopping in the implementation of the agreements. The idea was that once Professor Kadzamira and the parties agreed on the intervention, I would deal with the logistical issues of

The breakthrough meeting

The parties that attended the October meeting included the Malawi Congress Party, represented by Hon Kate Kainja, Secretary General, and Hon Jodder Kanjere, Administrative Secretary, who were both former senior cabinet ministers during the rule of the Malawi Congress Party; the United Democratic Front, represented by Hon Paul Maulidi, then Minister of Justice and Attorney General; the Alliance for Democracy, represented by its Secretary General, Hon Wallace Chiume, MP and Hon Chinkhokwe Banda, MP. Parties outside parliament were MAFUNDE, represented by its President, George Nnensa; PETRA represented by its President, Kamuzu Chibambo; and the Malawi Democratic Party represented by its President, Kamlepo Kalua. The meeting was facilitated by Jan Nico van Overbeeke, an NIMD representative based in Maputo, Professor Zimani Kadzamira from the University of Malawi and myself, Kizito Tenthani, currently Executive Director CMD- Malawi.

developing a budget, getting funds into the country for the implementation of the activity, and seeing that the activity was implemented in such a way that it achieved the intended outcomes.

Although Professor Kadzamira and I had no prior experience in running multiparty meetings, we managed to assist parties overcome anxieties to the extent that they were able to elect a chair for the session and the subsequent process. The first chair was chosen from an opposition party to stress the need for equality in the platform. Our aspiration was that political parties should meet in the forum as equals. This was and has remained significantly different from the relationships and power dynamics that exist in the National Assembly.

A second important factor was that the meeting was held in-camera. This was a way to safeguard the democratic space that was opening up. It allowed political parties to make concessions and agreements that they would not have entered into if the meeting had been held in public for fear of negative perceptions. It was the political parties themselves that agreed to meet in-camera.

Setting up the platform: steps and challenges

I was the person responsible for convening the multiparty committee's meetings that followed the October breakthrough. These meetings were ad hoc and were called multiparty committee meetings merely because more than one political party was involved. Being ad hoc meant that the meetings had no pre-defined agenda. We would meet, discuss and decide on activities that we'd like to implement, drawing from the list of priorities generated at the first multiparty meeting. Activities included a series of meetings on inter-party political violence and a conference on voter apathy. But there was no structure and there was no broader goal we were aiming to achieve. Operating without a defined agenda was unsatisfactory. Our activities were so disjointed that it was difficult to see where everything was leading.

After about a year of working this way, I asked NIMD to support a strategic planning exercise for political parties. It seemed to me that a strategic plan would be an important step toward actualizing the multiparty dialogue platform. The process leading up to the actual strategic planning workshop included three key tasks.

The first task involved consultations with all political parties on the feasibility and desirability of coming up with a shared mission (broad objective or agenda) and vision for our multiparty platform. The idea was to get politicians thinking about what such a platform could set out to achieve. I also approached party leadership, taking the time to visit party presidents (apart from the president of the ruling party) to sell the idea and to lobby them to commit their parties to taking part. The ruling party at this point was the

UDF, with Bingu wa Mutharika as Malawi's President. Although I did not meet the President himself, I met with the former President, H. E Bakili Muluzi, who was the leader of the party and held the position of Chairperson. He had previously committed to the platform for dialogue and was a powerful ally in this initiative. I asked all those I met to suggest issues they felt were vital to consider in the strategic planning exercise. In this way I developed a preparatory list of priority concerns and issues.

The second task involved consultations with stakeholders other than political parties: CSOs, religious institutions, the international community and academia. These groups were targeted in order to gain insight into what they thought the value of the proposed platform could be and indeed whether such a platform was even feasible in Malawi.

The third task was to identify a facilitator acceptable to all, taking into account the various sensitivities involved in gathering a full spectrum of political parties under one roof. I decided Professor Kadzamira would be the right candidate for the challenge as he had already proven himself acceptable to all parties during his involvement in our first formal multiparty meeting, despite his association with the MCP during the one party era. The Professor also possessed unsurpassed facilitation abilities.

By October 2004, we were finally ready for the strategic planning workshop itself. Scanning our political landscape for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, we began by developing and refining the preparatory list of issues political parties and other stakeholders had already suggested. The process became very heated and controversial – different parties had very different interests. As facilitator, Professor Kadzamira regularly had to jump in to manage the discussion and pacify the situation. There was, for example, a definite attempt to box the ruling party into a corner as it was perceived to be the source of many political problems. During the SWOT analysis, inter-party intolerance, unequal distribution of resources and a weak legal political party framework were identified as threats, and directly blamed on the ruling party. The UDF protested hotly and threatened to pull out if the opposition parties continued to use the platform to attack them.

In a private moment, I asked the UDF delegates if they would be comfortable to see all the other political parties convening among themselves, setting and implementing the agenda without UDF involvement. This swayed them because they realized they were better placed to protect their interests if they remained part of the process. Also, I emphasized, all decisions in the platform would be taken by consensus, meaning that they would have the power of veto. This served to reassure the ruling party that they would not be victimized by the opposition. I should hasten to add that the UDF were further persuaded by NIMD's condition that only participating political parties could benefit from the bilateral programme. This financial incentive also encouraged the ruling party to remain engaged. In fact, it proved a helpful condition to secure the cooperation of all parties across the political spectrum.

Despite this kind of conflict bubbling up during the workshop, we did well to prioritize our list of issues and cluster them into strategic objectives. As it was obvious how these objectives contributed to a broader vision and mission of multiparty democracy, it was easy for parties to agree to tackle them. Issues that were identified to be in the interest of most of the parties were the issues tabled, and ways they could be resolved were negotiated. These issues included the gaps that existed in the Constitution and other legislation such as the Political Party Act, as well as voter apathy and the issues of promoting tolerance and of accountability.

The neutral facilitation of the process was a key factor in isolating broader political objectives from petty personalized issues throughout the strategic planning process. We had to continually remind parties that the aim of the strategic planning process was to identify broad objectives that would serve to guide the multiparty platform for the good of political parties themselves, but also in the best interests of Malawi. We kept highlighting that the aim of the SWOT analysis, for instance, was to inform our interventions and priority areas of reform.

Registering as a trust

While negotiating strategic objectives, it became apparent that political parties were not only looking for an instrument to implement their different and varying aspirations, but that they were also looking for a ‘space’ where these aspirations could be talked about. So, once the purpose or function of the platform was clarified, we turned to the question of form: parties realized that they needed a structure to oversee the implementation of all the strategic objectives and activities, and thus proposed formalizing our ad hoc committee discussions into a formal organization. This was another breakthrough moment in the journey from ad hoc committee to an influential institution.

Following investigations, we decided to register as a Trust, and not as an ordinary non-governmental organization (NGO). The reason was that political parties themselves wanted to be the trustees, that is, the owners of the organization. To register, we needed a constitution in which issues of membership and membership eligibility would be spelled out. The constitution would also serve as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the political parties involved. We put a task force representing a cross section of the parties together to prepare a constitution for us. With lawyers within the task force, this work could be done internally. A Board and Secretariat were appointed. The draft constitution was presented to this new Board, who in turn approved and adopted it.

The name of the new institution had to be decided as well, and initially we called it the Malawi Centre for Multiparty Democracy. Later we changed our name to the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Malawi (CMD–M).

CMD–M was finally launched in October 2005, after a two-year process during which initial antagonisms were overcome and a willingness to engage in dialogue across political divides had strengthened. We had covered a great distance between 2002 and 2005, and our journey thus far had been a success, although not without its struggles. At the time of our launch, we were faced with four more challenges: defining membership of CMD–M; the dual role of Executive Director and Country Coordinator; the NIMD bilateral programme, especially funding criteria; and decision-making mechanisms within CMD–M meetings. These are discussed below.

By 2005, Malawi had over thirty registered political parties. It was important for us to be as inclusive as possible, while at the same time to remain focused so as to have a real impact on the democratization objective. The Board decided that CMD–M would be a platform for parliamentary parties since they were legitimately elected in general elections. Non-parliamentary parties, which did not yet have a constituency proven through elections, would be included in CMD–M activities at the discretion of the Board.

One of the challenges I now faced was that of playing the dual role of both ED and NIMD Coordinator. When the decision was taken to establish CMD–M as a formal institution, members asked NIMD to continue providing secretarial services to the new organization until such time as it had set up its own Secretariat. So, with the registration of CMD–M as a Trust, I became the Executive Director, and therefore answerable to the Board. At the same time, however, I was employed by NIMD and in charge of overseeing the bilateral programme which required monitoring and, when needed, sanctioning political parties in order to comply with the contractual regulations and set conditions. In practical terms, this meant that I would wear the NIMD mantle, as Country Coordinator, giving instructions to political parties and deciding on their funding possibilities while dealing with the bilateral programme. But when dealing with the multiparty platform, for example during Board meetings, I had to play the role of Executive Director, receiving instructions from the same political parties and providing them with progress reports.

With the benefit of hindsight, I think this was a good arrangement as it protected the office of the Executive Director from undue political influence because no political party, especially the Chair, could influence the decisions of the Country Coordinator. The Executive Director was effectively ‘shielded’ by NIMD. This was very important in the formative stages of the platform, although it was not an enviable position, and perhaps one of the most difficult I faced.

Another challenge we faced during this phase of the organization concerned the bilateral programme and its funding criteria. Between 2002 and 2005, NIMD provided bilateral support to both parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties. The allocation of resources was project based, and there were no set criteria for who should receive how much for what. It was actually the non-parliamentary parties, especially MAFUNDE and PETRA, which received a lot of resources, simply because they had relatively youthful people well

experienced in project management (especially proposal development and financial reporting), unlike the more established, older parties that often had difficulties developing a good proposal or financial report. This allocation scenario, however, was no longer consistent with either the decisions taken by the new CMD–M Board regarding membership, nor with the new NIMD focus on strategic investment in the institutional development of political parties, nor the framework of political party development in Malawi.

Changing the practice of political party funding became a very hot potato. The political parties represented in Parliament argued that only they should receive funding for their institutional development, whereas the parties not represented in Parliament argued that all registered parties should be eligible regardless of whether they were represented in Parliament or not. To resolve this matter, NIMD put the ball in the court of the Malawian political parties themselves, asking parties to propose a new approach. After much arguing to and fro, a decision was reached: only parties with representation in Parliament would be eligible for funding, while non-parliamentary parties should be included in the multiparty programmes funded through CMD–M. In addition, the parties agreed on the allocation criteria for parliamentary party funding as follows: fifty per cent equal shares regardless of the size of the party in parliament, and fifty per cent pro rata, based on the size of the party in parliament.

Another important issue that needed to be resolved was the decision-making mechanisms within CMD–M. Pushed by the ruling party, the UDF, it was agreed that decisions should be taken by consensus rather than by majority vote in order to avoid political parties ganging up against each other.

Negotiating electoral reform

One of the reform areas that CMD–M agreed to work on was levelling the playing field for political parties during general elections. In 2008 CMD–M became very concerned about the post-election violence that had erupted in Kenya. Could something like that happen in Malawi too? Initially, we thought that the Kenyan Electoral Commission was at the centre of the controversy because we knew that Kenyan political parties had lost trust in their electoral management body. There were many similarities in the way Electoral Commissioners were appointed in Kenya and in Malawi. In both cases, there was one supreme appointing authority, the President. Opposition parties in both countries were convinced that Commissioners were thus there to serve the interests of the appointing authority and consequently had no trust whatsoever in the Electoral Commission.

In Malawi, the opposition resisted and challenged the appointment of the Commissioners, arguing that President Mutharika did not follow due process: he was supposed to appoint Commissioners following consultations with political parties. But to no avail. The courts ruled in favour of the President and the Commissioners were sworn in and

started working – we were heading for the 2009 general elections. With such low levels of trust in the Electoral Commission, the risk of a contested election outcome with negative post-election fall-out was high. I introduced this concern to the Board members of CMD–M with the suggestion to engage the Electoral Commission in discussion aimed at finding an acceptable way forward. Unfortunately, the proposal was rejected by all the political parties except the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the de facto ruling party created by Mutharika after defecting from the UDF.

Convinced of the value of my proposal, I began lobbying the main parties individually. I went to the UDF and succeeded in winning over the Secretary General and his Deputy. Since the Deputy was a very forceful figure, I asked him to talk to the other parties informally, especially AFORD, MAFUNDE, and PETRA. I suggested that CMD–M could facilitate a visit to Kenya through the NIMD network, to learn more about what had caused the fall-out after the December 2007 presidential elections. But, I said, only those willing to engage with the Malawian Electoral Commission could participate in the exchange. The UDF subsequently convinced the other political parties that engaging the Electoral Commission to resolve the existing distrust was not a bad idea after all.

At the same time, the MCP president, John Tembo, got wind that the UDF wanted to participate in the initiative to engage the Electoral Commission. He called me to a meeting, and gave me a serious dressing down. He said that CMD–M was part of the plot that stole his victory in the 2004 elections. He referred to documents which contained his evidence. I guess that these were some of the documents that were tendered in court to build his case in contesting the results of the 2004 election (the case, however, never reached the hearing stage on the technicality that he had lodged his complaint later than the constitutional requirement of forty-eight hours after polling). He told me in no uncertain language that his party would not take part in the initiative to engage the Electoral Commission and that he would make sure the rest of the parties withdrew their agreement.

A day later, I got a call from Bakili Muluzi, Chairperson of the UDF and former President of Malawi, asking what I was doing in trying to push the political parties to work with the very Electoral Commission they had challenged in court. He indicated that the UDF, together with the MCP, would not be part of the initiative. If we were to proceed regardless, they would pull out of CMD–M on the grounds that we held a hidden agenda. I asked him to grant me an audience since I could not respond effectively over the phone. He agreed, but said I must see him in four hours' time. This meant that I had to leave immediately and travel a distance of 320 kilometres at top speed.

When I arrived, Muluzi was in the company of senior party officials, all former senior cabinet ministers (including Sam Mpasu, former Minister and Speaker of the National Assembly, George Ntafu, former Minister of Health, and Friday Jumbe, former Minister of Finance), while I was all by myself! Muluzi told me he was aware of the programme

that we were trying to pursue and that the UDF had unwittingly been persuaded to endorse. He told me he had received a call about our sinister motives from Tembo, the MCP President, who claimed that the initiative was a ploy of the DPP to rig the election and hoodwink political parties.

In reply, I described my meeting with Tembo, and admitted that he had indeed told me he considered CMD–M to be an arm of the DPP, operating with the intent of assisting the Electoral Commission to rig the forthcoming election. I also told him that Tembo had referred to some documents which suggested that CMD–M had allegedly assisted in stealing his victory in the 2004 election, by providing resources to the Election Commission that had enabled them to manipulate the elections in favour of UDF. Yes, I told him that Tembo had said that the UDF, with Bingu as their candidate, had stolen the 2004 elections! This put Muluzi in a fix. To side with Tembo and MCP would be to agree that the UDF had indeed rigged the election. He simply couldn't do that. Instead he immediately directed his party to be part of the initiative. Furthermore, he took it upon himself to talk Tembo and the MCP into joining the initiative too. The result was that all parties eventually endorsed the initiative to work with the Electoral Commission and were willing to participate in it.

The Commission, for its part, was just as sceptical about engaging with political parties. After all, these same political parties had opposed and rejected their appointment. To overcome this obstacle, I decided to engage the Commission Chairperson in person. As Justice Msosa is a devout Catholic, and I am a Catholic too, I proposed a meeting after a church service and sought an appointment in her chambers at the Supreme Court. During the appointment we discussed the idea and I pointed out the potential benefits for the Commission. I outlined the process and assured her that the political parties would have a preparatory meeting during which they would agree on issues to table in the dialogue with the Commission. I told her that I would be the one making presentations while the parties would add to the points. I also assured her that the meetings would take place in-camera. And lastly, I offered to take at least one Commissioner on the exchange visit to Kenya. The Chairperson accepted these proposals.

The visit to Kenya took place in 2008. The delegation was formed by one representative of each of the political parties participating in CMD–M, the ED of CMD–M, one Electoral Commissioner and one member from civil society. The visit resulted in laying the foundation for subsequent successful interactions between the political parties and the Electoral Commission. These meetings were so successful that the Electoral Commission and CMD–M agreed that the dialogue should become an ongoing activity even in between elections.

What made these interactions successful was that both sides avoided being confrontational. The strategy whereby political parties met beforehand to agree on their presentations as a united front to the Commission assisted the process. However, the illusion

should not be created that these preparatory meetings were smooth. On the contrary, huge fights took place and there were heated disagreements on what should be presented and what should be left out. In a number of instances, I advised that those issues we couldn't agree on should be dropped and that we should concentrate our energy on areas of agreement.

So much trust had been built between the ruling party and the opposition parties during 2008 that just a week before the 2009 elections all political parties signed a commitment to peaceful elections, with the Chair of the Electoral Commission and me as ED of CMD–M signing as witnesses.

Why did our approach to electoral reform work? Well, there are a number of reasons, the most important of which are outlined below.

First, the approach worked because I mediated between politicians, persuading them to talk to each other. Furthermore, talking informally to politicians on a one-to-one basis assisted in breaking down barriers between us and in building a level of trust in the value of the multiparty dialogue.

The role of incentives should be recognized as a second factor in our success. The exchange visit to Kenya, for example, was something that parties were very excited about. It gave them the opportunity to learn first-hand about the violent post-election fallout in Kenya from their counterparts there. When reflecting on the lessons learned, we were able to detect some similarities between their situation and the situation in Malawi. It created a keen awareness that if the parties did not take responsibility for addressing our situation, we risked ending up with the same breakdown as Kenya.

A third success factor is the impartiality of the facilitator and convener of the multiparty dialogue, and their ability to access all political leaders regardless of their affiliations. The performance of this function is absolutely key because these positions require the trust of all political parties (as well as important state institutions such as the Electoral Commission and the wider civil society) to execute their role effectively.

Implementing legislative reform

The Political Parties Registration and Regulation Act (PPRRA) came into force in 1993, soon after the referendum that ushered in multiparty politics in Malawi. The law was put together to allow the operations of political parties, since prior to this there had been only one party, the Malawi Congress Party. For almost twenty years, this law has guaranteed the rights of citizens to form political parties, have them registered by the state and to participate in their campaign and recruitment activities. The law also provided for the entitlement of some political parties to state funding.

A call for the reform of this Act was triggered by the ongoing problem CMD–M faced regarding the proliferation of political parties and subsequent question of inclusivity in our membership. By 2010, there were close to forty registered political parties in Malawi. Despite the fact that the CMD–M constitution provides for block representation of non-parliamentary parties on the Board of CMD–M, there is no formula for how this block should be constituted. This problem encouraged the Board to think about why there were so many registered political parties, when only a handful played an active role in the political arena. Was the law perhaps more concerned with the registration of political parties than it was with the regulation of how they were supposed to function? CMD–M decided to take a closer look at the law with a view to considering whether amendments were needed to fix some gaps, or indeed whether an overhaul of the entire law was necessary. A thorough process ensued.

To begin, we needed to build our knowledge of the current law so that we could identify the gaps that would necessitate either amendment or a complete overhaul before making any suggestions. To this end, we approached a constitutional lawyer and asked him to prepare a detailed presentation of the current law and to guide us in discussion thereof. Once equipped with a better understanding of the law, we agreed that a completely new law was needed, made proposals on aspects it should incorporate and asked our lawyer to produce a zero draft of a new political party bill. This draft was taken to other stakeholders for consultation, including CSOs, religious organizations and traditional authorities. The media was also involved in the process to encourage public debate and knowledge. The inputs from the various consultation processes were incorporated in the draft.

During the course of these consultations, it became apparent that there was some resistance from the smaller parties who felt that the new law was actually trying to get rid of them. I realized that, if not handled properly, the smaller parties might attempt to throw a spanner in the works. I therefore made a point of explaining that a section of the law would state that it did not apply retrogressively. In other words, already registered political parties would not be affected if the law was passed.

After revising the draft, we decided to lobby the Minister of Justice for his blessing and support in the hope that this would expedite things. The review of laws rests with the Law Commission, but in practice these review processes take a lot of time, and we were concerned that momentum would be lost.

The Minister of Justice welcomed the draft law initiative and suggested that CMD–M organize a National Consultative Conference on the review of the PPRRA. He suggested the conference include the Law Commission, and the Registrar of Political Parties, as well as other stakeholders such as civil society, the Malawi Electoral Commission, religious institutions, traditional authorities and political parties themselves. He offered to open and close the conference and suggested that, once all the consultations and

revisions were complete, we should present the draft to the President and request it be accepted as a Government Bill.

While the process suggested by the Minister of Justice was a sound one, we faced the risk that opposition parties would become suspicious of the Government's intentions. Because of this, we had to carefully explain the different avenues law reform could take. I also approached the Chairperson of the Legal Affairs Committee and asked him if we could present our draft to the whole committee as all political parties are represented there. He agreed and this meeting took place on 10 April 2012.

CMD–M quickly mobilized resources to put together the proposed National Conference, and indeed the Minister of Justice was our guest of honour. Since the media were fully involved in this process, the National Conference, which took place in December 2012, received wide media coverage and triggered great public interest.



The Minister of Justice Hon. Ralph Kasambara (in the middle) consulting with the Solicitor General Janet Chikaya Banda (on the left) on a proposed amendment during the National Consultative Conference on the review of the political party registration and regulation act. December 2012

In the process of reviewing the PPRRA, we benefited greatly from international knowledge and experience. We examined equivalent laws from Ghana and Kenya, undertook exchange visits to both countries, and consulted the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) for its input on best practices.

We have, at the time of writing this chapter, just produced a revised draft that will be widely circulated through the media to get further input from the general public. We will also conduct a focused review with the Ministry of Justice, the Law Commission and the Registrar of Political Parties, and with political parties themselves. We plan to hold regional consultative meetings in all three administrative regions in Malawi, targeting mostly regional and district party officials for their input. After consolidating all the inputs and suggestions we will conduct a second National Consultative Conference to present the revised draft. Thereafter, we will seek an audience with the President through the Minister of Justice to request our draft be adopted as a Government bill for decision making in Parliament.

The biggest achievement

Just two weeks before the 2009 elections, the Chair of the Electoral Commission informed the political parties at a CMD–M MEC meeting that the Commission had done all it could to clean the voter register, but that it still contained some errors. The Chair explained that the parties had to make a choice as to whether the Commission should continue cleaning the register, and postpone the election, or go into the election with a register that had some errors. The parties took it upon themselves to deliberate and make quick calls to their principals, and within an hour came back with a joint position that the elections should proceed anyway. Ten years ago we would not have imagined this kind of multiparty cooperation on such a critical issue would be possible in Malawi. It is a wonderful testimony to the degree of maturity among politicians and to their ability to work with each other in the greater interest of the country.

As a facilitator, I derive tremendous satisfaction when I see political parties coming together to consult each other across the ruling party–opposition parties divide. It is remarkable that the parties have kept together this long when you consider the hostility and distance that once dominated the relationship between them. The fact that political parties trust that their interests are safeguarded in CMD–M is a key reason for our longevity. As Executive Director I consider these the biggest achievements of our multiparty platform.

Kizito Tenthani

Executive Director of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy–Malawi

Tanzania's political landscape



As the winds of political change blew across Africa in the early 1990s, a Presidential Commission was set up under the leadership of then-Chief Justice Francis Nyalali, to collect the views of citizens and make recommendations on whether Tanzania should adopt a multiparty system or retain a single party one. Based on the Commission's reports, the Constitution of Tanzania was modified and Tanzania became a multiparty democracy on 1 July 1992.

Despite this peaceful beginning, the transition to multiparty democracy was characterized by mutual suspicion and antagonism between the ruling party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), and the emergent opposition parties, some of which were led by CCM dissidents. Twenty-seven years of single party rule meant that there was absolutely no culture of multiparty democracy in the country, and no experience of political party opposition as distinct from opposition to Government. Indeed, opposition to the CCM was equated with opposition to the Government, and therefore virtually considered treasonous.

Structural odds were also stacked against a vibrant multiparty democracy. Key institutions that could support the democratic transition – such as an electoral management body, an independent media and a vibrant civil society – were either non-existent or very weak. The desperately needed legal and constitutional reforms fell under the ruling party, who had control of the pace and direction of reform.

The instinctive, deep rooted hostility among the ruling élite to the notion of political opposition and the opposition's abhorrence of the CCM was violently manifest in the dispute over the results of 1995, 2000 and 2005 elections in Zanzibar. When violence erupted after the 2000 elections, police gunned down civilians during the protest marches of 26 and 27 January 2001. Many citizens were killed, while others fled, mostly to Kenya. In an attempt to resolve the election dispute and resulting crisis, the Secretaries General of CCM and of the opposition party, CUF, signed a Political Accord on 10 October 2001. The Accord provided for the formation of a Political Parties Consultative Council which would bring together all registered political parties to discuss issues of national concern, including the disputed elections. Despite this first and very significant step towards multiparty cooperation, inter-party relations were still characterized by suspicion and hostility at the time when the story of the Tanzania Centre for Democracy began.



by Daniel Loya

Executive Director, Tanzania Centre for Democracy

Tanzania: Compromise at the heart of consensus

Mr Loya is a graduate of a B.A (Hon) and an MBA from the University of Dar es Salaam in Political Science and Marketing Management respectively. He started his career in Tanzania civil service. After leaving the civil service, he joined the then large government owned commercial sector before joining humanitarian disaster assistance operations in Western Tanzania serving refugees from DR Congo and Burundi who were fleeing politically inspired violence and persecution in their countries. Here he came face to face with human suffering caused by bad governance in the two African countries as well as small refugee case loads from other African countries. He left the refugee programmes to become the founding Executive Director of Tanzania Centre for Democracy in August 2006 upon being selected by Tanzanian Parliamentary Parties who had founded the centre in July 2005.

I joined the Tanzania Centre for Democracy (TCD) in August 2006, four years after the programme was initiated by NIMD together with Tanzania's major political players. By the time I came on board as Executive Director, critical ground work had already taken place and significant milestones had already been reached under the stewardship of Ms Natasha Groom, the first NIMD Country Representative, Professor Ted Maliyamkono from the Eastern African Universities Research Programme, an NIMD Consultant, and Professor Athumani Liviga, the NIMD Country Coordinator. I continued promoting multiparty cooperation, picking up the reins at a time when TCD needed to focus on actualizing its vision, mission and objectives. Although a more recent turning point in the life of TCD, I begin my story with the formulation of a strategic plan which, while intended to create a common reform agenda.

Developing a reform agenda

It is August 2006. Developing a strategic plan was the first key activity TCD undertook upon my appointment. Members of the Technical Committee (TC) from the five parliamentary parties gathered to develop a strategic plan for their joint forum. It was known that the position of the ruling and opposition parties over the constitutional review were divergent. The opposition parties, Chama cha Maendeleo na Demokrasia (CHADEMA) and Civic United Front (CUF), wanted a completely new Constitution. The Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Tanzania's ruling party, was of the view that the Constitution was perfectly adequate, and was not in the least interested in entertaining the idea of constitutional reform. A senior Government Minister once summarized CCM's position, saying, 'If you want a new Constitution you will have to wait till you win the next election and then pursue your agenda.'

We had a rather polarized position on our hands! What was the right thing to do? If we as the TCD Secretariat declared that one of our strategic objectives should be to advocate for a new Constitution, or even to review the current Constitution, we would be seen as siding with the opposition parties and risk alienating the governing party who may then withdraw completely, thus jeopardizing the whole platform. If we totally dismissed the opposition parties' demands, we would similarly be seen as partisan, and inherently unsupportive of democratic reforms. Either option would render TCD irrelevant.

Although the way forward was not immediately apparent, the TCD Secretariat knew we had to capture this reform issue. Our country had experienced a democratic transition,

but democratic transformation was yet to take root. By this I mean that the prevailing constitutional order still favoured the governing party, leaving the opposition without an enabling framework that could nurture their growth. There were consequently a number of outstanding constitutional, legal and institutional reforms that needed to take place.

While pondering our options out of this impasse, we realized that what mattered most at this time was not the issue per se, but the way we formulated it. Politicians are famous for equivocal answers, but now we had the opportunity to put that skill to good use. The reworded objective read: '[To] advocate for an enabling constitutional and legal framework that will facilitate a level playing field'. This formulation was a form of constructive ambiguity that proved useful in moving the dialogue forward. Both the ruling and the opposition parties were comfortable enough with it to include the objective in the strategic plan.

Each member party representative in the TC took responsibility for preparing a specific component of the strategic plan. Conscious of the power the ruling party wields, I tactfully steered the division of tasks in such a way that the CCM was responsible for doing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. The TC was charged with overseeing the implementation of decisions made by the Heads of Parties meetings and was thus responsible for the formulation of the strategic plan. Professor Liviga, the NIMD coordinator, and I drafted the final document and strategic objectives based on these papers and discussion.

Getting the reform agenda adopted: the constitutional review process

As soon as our new strategic plan was launched in September 2006, I decided we should pursue the 'enabling constitutional and legal framework' objective through activities that were similarly broad, such as raising public awareness and providing learning opportunities for political leaders.

The public awareness campaign focused on basic democracy education, as well as specific reform issues, such as the need to review the various laws impacting on the operations of political parties, and the Electoral Law (which in essence was actually a call for the reform of the Constitution). After some time, we gradually introduced the topic of constitutional review more directly.

The public awareness campaign was conducted through two key strategies: the extensive use of media, and national conferences. TCD organized party speakers and experts for radio debates, including community radio stations, and television talk shows during which the public called in with questions and comments. We also held national level conferences attended by a wide range of political, civil society, and religious stakeholders. Speakers at these conferences included senior politicians from all TCD member

parties as well as renowned experts. Both strategies aimed at not only building public awareness, but also building momentum for constitutional and legal reforms.

Opportunities for party leaders to deepen their own understanding of the various components of democracy and its functioning were also vital. TCD organized three exchange visits for leaders of political parties to visit their counterparts in Malawi (2008), South Africa (2009), and Ghana (2010).

Under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) we organized what we called the Political Parties Monthly Dialogue Series, the meetings for which were convened behind closed doors. This series proved critical for party leaders as it provided the opportunity to hear from experts, and openly discuss reform issues with each other, including the quest for a constitutional review, in private.

As the Secretariat, we made sure quarterly reports summarizing the key outcomes of the various public awareness campaigns, dialogue series and conferences were submitted to the Summit of the Heads of Parties so that they too were kept up to date.

The public awareness and education process took place over four years. During this time it became increasingly obvious that more and more people recognized the need and shared the demand for a comprehensive review of the Constitution.

It was 2010, the year of another, new TCD strategic plan, and more importantly, another general election. This time there was consensus within TCD that a review of the Constitution was indeed a national reform issue. Free from any former ambiguity, the 2010 version of the objective was plainly stated as follows: ‘[To] advocate for the review of or a new Constitution’. Progress indeed.

In the run-up to the elections, both CHADEMA and CUF, the main opposition parties, included the call for a new Constitution in their election manifestos. There were also calls for a new Constitution in the media and among CSOs. However, the ruling party, CCM, did not include the issue in its manifesto.

Once the October elections were over, TCD organized another national conference, held on 14 December 2010. This time the theme was overt: ‘Why a new Constitution is needed in Tanzania’. The conference was well attended by senior leaders from all the political parties, civil society organizations, members of academia, activists, and representatives from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Dar es Salaam. The guest of honour was the Registrar of Political Parties. The media was there in full force, providing live coverage on television. After the event itself, the conference report was duly circulated to all the political parties, Government agencies, media and other stakeholders. It contained a definite call for a new Constitution – clearly nationwide momentum had been built. Shortly after the conference, the press asked the Prime Minister, ‘what will the Govern-

ment do in the wake of these various calls for the new Constitution?’ The Prime Minister replied that the calls must be acknowledged and could in no way be ignored. He indicated that he was going to advise the President to seriously consider the issue.

On the eve on a new year, 31 December 2010, President Jakaya Kikwete surprised everyone, including his own party, by announcing that he was launching a constitutional review process and that subsequently, a Constitutional Review Commission would be put in place. These were not empty promises and Tanzania is proudly expecting a new Constitution by 2014.

Tanzania Centre for Democracy’s roots

Multiparty dialogue does not begin with jointly formulating a strategic plan or agreeing on an agenda to guide the focus and actions of its members. To tell the full story of Tanzania’s constitutional reform process, I would have to go back many, many years. While of course there are always multiple role players involved, this story focuses on TCD’s contribution and hence begins with NIMD’s first mission to Tanzania in 2001.

A month after CCM and CUF signed the Political Accord, which provided for the formation of a Political Parties Consultative Council (PPCC) that would bring all registered political parties together to discuss issues of national concern, the First Secretary of the Royal Dutch Embassy in Dar es Salaam met with the Secretary General of the CCM to brief him on an impending visit from the NIMD delegation. This meeting duly happened on 21 November 2001 and similar meetings were held shortly thereafter with leaders of the other political parties, including CHADEMA, CUF, TLP and UDP. At first, NIMD’s proposal for a multiparty dialogue platform was met with some reserve. Who was NIMD? What agenda did they have? How would their initiative add to the existing PPCC?

A second meeting was held with the CCM, this time with the Presidential Advisor present. It was preceded by a written submission, including an extensive memo from the Ambassador, dated 3 December 2001, which detailed NIMD’s history and composition, as well as its motivation and mission in Tanzania. An NIMD policy brief was attached. The purpose of this second meeting was to share the results of NIMD’s round of discussions with other political parties, including insights into their capacity-building needs, and to discuss possible projects and formats for a project proposal. After intensive discussion, lobbying and incentivizing, a breakthrough was reached. Not long after, cooperation agreements were signed with each of the five parties.

Three factors were key in Tanzania opening its door to the NIMD mission. First, the profile of NIMD as an organization founded by seven political parties which had themselves resolved to cooperate and jointly support other political parties helped allay CCM fears about NIMD. Second, and probably more importantly, was the prospect that all

political parties would receive direct financial party assistance and that CCM would get the lion's share (two thirds) of the total funds earmarked for this purpose, as the disbursement formula would be based on the electoral strength of the parties. Third, the principles of ownership and partnership which inform NIMD's modus operandi further reassured CCM.

The start-up years

NIMD pursued a three-pronged approach during the first four years of support for the various political parties in Tanzania. This included the bilateral programme between itself and the individual parliamentary parties (CCM, CUF, CHADEMA, TLP, UDP), where NIMD made direct financial transfers to each party for the implementation of agreed projects. The approach also included a series of cross-party joint capacity-building initiatives organized by NIMD. For example, a three-day course was held in Dar es Salaam on financial, administrative, information technology, and political management in December 2003; and a training methodology and negotiating skills workshop was conducted in March 2004. The net effect of these encounters was that they brought former opponents together as co-learners, providing opportunities for people to get to know each other, and slowly defuse the four-opposition-parties against the one-ruling-party dynamic. Cooperation at this level helped the ground shift, so that instead of adversarial partisan engagements, the parties' delegates slowly began to address substantive issues.

The NIMD approach also included a regional initiative, the East and Southern Africa Regional Programme (ESARP). This involved bringing ruling and opposition party leaders from several African countries together in regional conferences, exchange visits and periodic partnership summits hosted in The Hague. Through ESARP, the Tanzanians were witnesses to political tolerance and cooperation among their counterparts participating in crucial and sometimes even heated and contentious debates. In November 2004 Tanzania's parties jointly prepared for and hosted a NIMD supported regional conference in Dar es Salaam, which focused on enhancing the quality of democracy and deepening political party cooperation throughout Southern and Eastern Africa. Participation in ESARP provided thorough socialization in the ethos and ways of multiparty cooperation. For the Tanzanian political parties these regional exchanges afforded valuable lessons which they found they could later apply when endeavouring to solve similar challenges at home.

The first multiparty meeting

It took almost three years of working together in this way before the first formal multiparty meeting took place. On 11 June 2004 the Heads of Parties and Secretaries General of all the parliamentary parties – the CCM, CHADEMA, CUF, UDP and TLP – together with both local and Dutch NIMD representatives, gathered at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Dar es Salaam. Several important issues were tabled regarding the status of

cross-party matters and the regional programme, ESARP. However, the top-most item on the agenda was the institutionalization of our multiparty process.

Mr van Rijn of NIMD Netherlands urged those present to capitalize on the emergent goodwill and not to falter in their efforts to secure ongoing cooperation and the establishment of a joint forum. Initial ideas on the modalities for setting up the joint forum were explored and decided upon, with NIMD committing to support the interim Secretariat. In practical terms the parties were expected to identify and drive the strategic focus and activities of the new joint forum. Parties also agreed to draft and abide by a code of conduct. A task team comprising five people, one from each party, was established to be responsible for keeping the institutionalization ball rolling. The task team included Mr John Nkolo (UDP), Mr Anthony Komu (CHADEMA), Mr Cosmas Hinju (CCM), Mr Tambwe Hiza (CUF), and Mr Mrema (TLP).

Inclusivity is one of NIMD's guiding principles, ownership is another. These principles were put to the test during this meeting when the parties, responding to NIMD pressure to push the pace and take a certain direction, let their own position on the partnership be known: 'We are the owners of this programme for the promotion of multiparty democracy in Tanzania, and NIMD is the good facilitator.'

The spirit of ownership, but also of dialogue, due respect and accommodation, had begun to take root. The general demeanour had changed and adversarial rhetoric was toned down. Credit is also due to the UDP Chairperson, Hon John Cheyo, who skilfully chaired this auspicious meeting and helped steer participants towards consensus.

Sinking ship or turning point?

In February 2005, just eight months after the first formal multiparty meeting, a review and planning workshop was held for three days at the Tilapia Hotel, Mwanza, on the shores of Lake Victoria. The workshop specifically sought to help move the programme into the next phase of its institutional development. The agenda included a work review, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and strategic planning, to which the formula for the distribution of bilateral funds was added. Last, but not least, the new organization needed a name of its own.

This was a critical juncture in the joint forum and warranted a high-powered meeting. Delegates included senior representatives from each of the five parties – Mr Seif Shariff Hamad (CUF), Augustine Mrema (TLP), Sylvester Masinde (CHADEMA), Dr F. Masha (UDP) and NEC member Mujuni Kataraiya (CCM) – as well as Marcus Lens van Rijn from NIMD in the Netherlands and Professor A. Liviga as the NIMD Country Coordinator. Professor T. Malyamkono of ESARP and Mr Derrick Marco, a consultant from South Africa, were the workshop facilitators.

By way of review, Professor Liviga presented a paper which covered NIMD's programme since inception in 2002, entitled 'The NIMD Programme in Tanzania: Development, Problems and Prospects'. The presentation was received with mixed feelings – and then, as if a spleen had ruptured, opposition parties began bitterly criticizing NIMD. They alleged that NIMD openly favoured the ruling party by granting it the lion's share of available direct party assistance, and demanded a review of the funding criteria. The charge was denied by the NIMD representative, who sought to explain the formula used, but the scene quickly degenerated into one of criticism and counter criticism. Finally, all participants agreed on a bottom line: this matter needs improving.

Contrary to the strife and dark mood of the first day, good progress was made on the second, chaired by Dr Masha (UDP) and facilitated by Mr Derrick Marco. In an inspired move, Mr Marco started the day with a strategic visioning process, rather than with the highly emotive and potentially divisive issue of funding criteria. With hindsight, I realize how both tactful and tactical this was; by starting with a strategic planning discussion, participants were able to see the broader picture, and the rationale for coming together beyond direct individual party support. Patiently, Mr Marco guided participants towards consensus on the vision, mission and calendar of activities towards the institutionalization of the joint forum and joint projects. The workshop unanimously decided on the vision, mission and four strategic goals.

The last day of the workshop was dedicated to naming the organization and dealing with the thorny issue of funding criteria. A name was important to mark the development of this joint platform from a programme into an autonomous organization. Delegates agreed to call it the Tanzania Centre for Democracy (TCD).

And then, to everyone's surprise, the funding criteria issue was relatively easily resolved – granted, after heated discussion, but without too much strife. The CCM, supported by the CUF, made a crucial concession that moved the parties to agree on the following criteria for 2005: fifty per cent pro rata and fifty per cent based on performance at the last election of presidential votes and parliamentary seats.

If there is one thing that must be remarked on about this meeting, it is the spirit that emerged. A spirit generated by open, candid dialogue and a rare display of give and take, unprecedented examples of maturity and the ability of delegates to rise above narrow partisan concerns. Delegates demonstrated the very spirit of the slogan they chose for the new TCD – Tanzania First Before Parties. It was this exceptional meeting which indeed constituted a turning point in Tanzania's multiparty democracy and cast firm foundations for the challenges ahead.

TCD's vision, mission and strategic objectives

Vision: The Forum envisages a just, democratic, peaceful and prosperous society, free of inequalities, sensitive to gender, human rights and equal opportunities for all Tanzanians.

Mission: The Forum is to support the development of a strong multiparty democratic culture, where capacities of political parties are improved to engage in the political processes equally and develop a sustainable economy.

Strategic Objectives:

- Realization of culture of multiparty politics in Tanzania.
- Pursue capacity building in political parties.
- Sustainable economic development.
- Establishing a joint forum for realization of the above objectives.

Launching a new vessel

A month after the Mwanza strategic planning meeting, another meeting was called at the Mt Meru Hotel, Arusha, where top party leaders – Wilfred M. Lwakatare, Deputy Secretary General (CUF); Hulda Stanley Kibacha, Principal Assistant Secretary (CCM); John Momose Cheyo, National Chairman (UDP); Freeman Mbowe, National Chairman (CHADEMA); and Rajab Tao, Secretary General (TLP) – signed a formal Framework of Cooperation Agreement to establish TCD as an independent political parties' platform with its own Secretariat, which I would later head as its first Executive Director. An official launch was held four months later in July 2005. A splendid affair with more than five hundred delegates in attendance, the launch was a celebration both of the past work and the promise of a vibrant multiparty democracy that TCD represents.

As I sit here writing these last lines in my version of the Tanzania Centre for Democracy's story, Tanzanians are engaging with a draft of our new Constitution, and I am filled with a real sense of pride – in my country, my colleagues and in myself. The voyage ahead may be long, it may even be perilous, but we have good crew and a fine vessel.

Daniel Loya

Executive Director, Tanzania Centre for Democracy



Leaders of the political parties (CCM, CHADEMA, CUF, NCCR-Mageuzi, TLP, UDP and UPDP) at a press conference after signing resolutions on the parties' recommendations on constitutional amendments. 22 October 2013, Protea Courtyard Hotel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Uganda's political landscape



Uganda held its first multiparty elections in 2006, after more than two decades of a 'no-party' rule. Not only was the multiparty system itself still in its infancy, the participating parties were also poorly institutionalized, with weak systems for internal organization and democracy, communication and management and very limited levels of political organization.

The governing party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) won sixty-seven per cent of the three hundred and nine elected seats in those elections, a result hotly disputed by opposition parties. The opposition parties represented in Parliament are the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Democratic Party (DP), the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the Conservative Party (CP) and Jeema. Several opposition parties claimed the election had been rigged in favour of the NRM. The opposition considered the Electoral Commission to have limited autonomy and to be biased in composition. To say tension between the governing and opposition parties was high would be an understatement: they considered each other arch enemies.

Little had changed by the time preparations began for the 2011 elections. Distrust, suspicion and enmity riddled the landscape. While opposition parties formed themselves into an electoral alliance called the Inter-party Cooperation (IPC), there was still no dialogue and no cooperation of any sort between them and the NRM.

It was against this backdrop that NIMD was approached by the parties themselves to begin working in Uganda during the latter part of 2009.



by Shaun Mackay

NIMD Representative in Uganda and facilitator of the Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue

Putting Uganda first: in search of a shared agenda

Shaun Mackay is a South African researcher and political analyst. He conducted research on South Africa's transition during the crucial period 1990–94. During this period, he attended South Africa's own dialogue process which fashioned the country's new democratic dispensation, the CODESA talks, and interacted with representatives of all political parties and organizations involved. In his capacity as Manager of the Centre for Policy Studies, Mr Mackay ran the East and Southern African Programme (ESARP) on behalf of NIMD from its beginning in 2004 until 2007. He co-edited a book that resulted from the founding conference, entitled *Southern Africa Post Apartheid? The Search for Democratic Governance* (IDASA, 2004) that led to the establishment of NIMD's programme in the region. He was the coordinator of NIMD's South African dialogue platform from 2004. He is currently NIMD's representative in Uganda, where he has facilitated the dialogue process since its inception in 2009.

It was a public display of commitment, one Ugandans hardly dared dream of, when in February 2010 the Secretaries General of six rival political parties took each other's hands and pledged to work together for the common good of the country.

Surrounded by media and in the presence of local and foreign dignitaries, the Secretaries General gathered to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which governed their multiparty platform. But the occasion was about so much more than mere paperwork, so much more than public posturing. The opposition and the governing party were committing themselves to a process of dialogue aimed at resolving the dire challenges facing the country. They were committing themselves to the advancement of multiparty democracy. In essence, the occasion was about Putting Uganda First, which meant putting aside the narrow party considerations for the sake of national interest.



All signatories after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. 5 February 2010

Although I was deeply involved in the delicate and strenuous build-up to this moment, my job as the NIMD Country Coordinator had, in many ways, only just begun. Launch-

ing a multiparty platform on the eve of elections was like switching on a pressure cooker and turning the temperature way up high.

Starting the dialogue

It all started with a series of requests from various Ugandan political party representatives seeking help to better fulfil their roles. Several parties approached both the Dutch Ambassador in Uganda and NIMD in The Hague, independently. These included opposition parties as well as the governing NRM through its Secretary General.

Cooking up a storm

My first encounter with Ugandan political leaders came not in Uganda, but in Naivasha, Kenya, from 7–10 June 2009. There in that quiet valley, dense with African bush, where wild animals stroll nonchalantly past your window, another kind of creature was stamping up the dust. Political party representatives from all of NIMD's partner countries in the region were gathering for a regional conference. We had invited the NRM and the main opposition party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), to join us, hoping their participation in the experience would both induct and inspire them. My first impressions of Uganda's main protagonists formed as I watched them tearing into each other with accusations and counter accusations across the conference floor. Clearly they were iron-willed characters with strong opinions of each other, most of which were unfavourable.

Feelings ran high, and when a crisis in Uganda meant the FDC delegate had to be replaced by one of his colleagues, things reached a boiling point. The new FDC delegate and the NRM representative almost came to blows in the hotel lobby. The anger, the distress, the hatred ... it was alarming to witness. Yet later that day I saw the two of them side by side seemingly sharing a joke and looking quite amicable. What a change! What miracle had brought this turn around? The answer was simple but strategic: my colleague Karijn de Jong had arranged for the two to be seated at a dinner table with senior Ghanaian politicians who had a history of multiparty cooperation. Their good example and wise counsel, together with ample liquid refreshments, helped the agitated Ugandans calm down and begin to engage each other, not as enemies, but as compatriots with political differences. What a difference these small but risky interventions can make!

The first multiparty meeting

Fast forward a few months to a hot and dusty day at the Hotel Africana in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, where six political parties gathered to discuss the prospect of starting a dialogue process. We were luckier than some: our conference hall looked over

a lovely blue pool that provided at least the illusion of coolness as we, the NIMD facilitation team, sat sweating nervously inside. Each of the six Secretaries General, accompanied by their respective entourages, arrived and took their seats. A growing buzz rose above the din of the feeble air conditioning, and the air was thick with tension and anticipation.

This was the first time in more than twenty years that the opposition and the governing parties were meeting with the idea of some kind of cooperation in mind. For many in the opposition, it was the first time they were seeing their NRM counterparts in the flesh, the first time they were seated across a table from one another. Many of them had not spoken to each other civilly in years. It was a room full of sworn enemies. The conference table might just as well have been a great chasm, so vast was the political and emotional distance between them. Before the cool of evening, temperatures spiked and emotions boiled over. Delegates lashed out at each other, making no secret of their thoughts and feelings. Chaotic and fierce as it was, this flare up was also cathartic, and I realize now, looking back on the meeting, how crucial it was for delegates to let out some of that pent-up vitriol. It seemed a necessary step before they could look each other in the eye and talk about their grievances. There'd been no other forum, no other private or contained space in which to do so before.

As the day progressed, so too did our process. The NIMD team shared examples of their work in other African countries where multiparty platforms were already working well and encouraged delegates to continue on the path they had begun themselves. We pointed out that the alternative to talking and cooperation was potentially more risky and devastating, not only to the parties, but to the country as a whole. By the time we left the Hotel Africana, delegates had committed themselves to establishing a dialogue platform and undertook to convince the rest of their parties of its absolute necessity, despite ongoing reservations and hostilities.

It was here at the Hotel Africana that delegates confirmed their acceptance of NIMD's bona fides as the platform's facilitator and Secretariat. It was here that they first demonstrated a collective will to move beyond their seemingly intractable view of each other as enemies and undertake the route of dialogue and cooperation. It was here that the Ugandan platform passed its first test – ensuring commitment from all.

Not possible in Uganda!

Our next big step, and another major challenge, followed shortly. We had already seen the influence of the Ghanaian political leaders on their Ugandan colleagues at the regional conference in Kenya in June 2009 and proposed an exchange visit from 21–24 October 2009 to Ghana. Not only had the Ghanaians successfully established a multi-party platform, they also had a similar historical and political background. NIMD wanted to move the Ugandan politicians from their entrenched adversarial environment to a

more neutral one. We hoped they'd feel safer to talk about issues and reach compromises that would further negotiations towards a dialogue platform of their own, in less charged surroundings. The exchange would also discuss the platform's structure and modalities, in other words, its rules of engagement. Last but not least, we wanted to compile a preliminary list of issues for the platform to address, a kind of shared agenda if you like. Together with the rules of engagement, these issues would form the basis of a formal MOU that could be signed once back in Kampala. An ambitious plan indeed!

Alas! Just getting delegates to Ghana was a mammoth challenge. Participation was not secured up until the day before departure. Opposition parties were unconvinced of going to Ghana with the governing party:

'It will compromise our integrity.'

'It will look like we are selling out.'

'What will our members think if they see us going off with them?'

The opposition parties also felt that the governing party wasn't taking the trip seriously as their Secretary General (who was also the Minister of Security) could not participate in the Ghanaian exchange due to other commitments. The best thing for me to do was to try find out what lay at the heart of their objections, to unearth what lay beneath the surface that was causing such reluctance. I knew this would be impossible in bilateral meetings with a number of party officials present so, drawing on my experience in the South African transition, I decided to meet with people individually. I invited members of the parties' leadership to meet me socially, for drinks and a meal – well mostly for drinks! When we met each other one-on-one, we found we had more in common than had initially been apparent and began to bond at a personal level. We talked about each other's motives, fears and aspirations for the Ghana trip and reached agreement on its importance. I attempted not only to offer reassurance on concerns, but also to act on them. For example, one of the opposition's key concerns was indeed the NRM's Secretary General's inability to make the Ghana exchange. Accordingly I secured an official letter from the Secretary General authorizing his representatives to act on behalf of the party. I also reassured delegates that NIMD was doing substantial work on a draft MOU and would be well prepared for this part of the programme should the meeting agree to proceed with it.

Getting everyone to Ghana was a breakthrough in itself, but certainly not the end of hostility and suspicion, which continued to bedevil the visit. Several factors helped turn this around, the most important being the participation and influence of two elder Ghanaian statesmen, the former President, J.A. Kufuor and the former Prime Minister, P. V. Obeng. The mere fact that such senior and respected politicians supported the process and found it worthy enough to endorse was a powerful example.

Another key factor was the cordial relationship demonstrated by the Ghanaian ruling party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and its main opposition the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The two Secretaries General willingly shared the stage and, sitting next to each other, talked openly about their experiences and the value of their dialogue platform. Moreover they displayed a genuine friendship – even completing each other’s sentences and joking about serious issues. Ugandan politicians couldn’t believe their eyes:

‘This is not possible in Uganda!’ they said.

The event was a pivotal moment in the exchange, convincing even the sceptics that there was definite merit in a dialogue platform.

The examples of MOUs from other countries, and the work NIMD had put into preparing for a possible Ugandan version, helped the drafting process hugely, but it still was not easy getting consensus on what parties would commit themselves to, nor on the exact wording of clauses. We benefited enormously from Mr Obeng and the two Ghanaian Secretaries General who helped to negotiate agreement on trickier clauses and convinced their counterparts to take a leap of faith and agree on the MOU. Fortunately it was easier agreeing to a name, and our platform was duly named the Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD).

Once we reached agreement on our pre-election agenda, we would be ready for the formal signing ceremony to be held back in Kampala.

Negotiation and more negotiation: the pre-election agenda

Reaching a shared agenda for the new IPOD was part and parcel of the exchange visit’s programme – and I had prepared thoroughly for the task. After a long round-robin consultation with all six political parties prior to our departure, I had drawn up an ambitious draft agenda from an even more ambitious wish-list of issues. The round robin had not been easy; as you will recall, the parties still viewed the trip to Ghana with suspicion and consequently suggested just about anything they could think of for the agenda. Not surprisingly then, negotiating the agenda was not easy either. With an election only thirteen months away, election related issues were top priority. In fact the shared agenda was not so much crafted by design as thrust on us by circumstance.

One of the most contentious agenda issues concerned the Electoral Commission. The opposition refused to go into the impending election with the same Commissioners who had run the last election. They argued that since the President had appointed them, they were in his debt. Moreover, they had helped rig the previous elections in his party’s favour by turning a blind eye to irregularities. They said things like:

‘Extra ballots had been printed in-country!’

‘Ballots were allowed to be hijacked on the way to the polling booths so that ballot papers could be pre-ticked in favour of the governing party!’

‘How can we be expected to go into an election presided over by such a biased authority?’

The opposition demanded that the Commissioners be booted out and replaced with mutually acceptable ones. The NRM, on the other hand, refused to budge on the matter, arguing that it was too late to do anything about it, even if it were so inclined. They had a point: changing the appointment process of these Commissioners would require a constitutional amendment and there was no time to effect this before the election. A seeming deadlock developed that rocked everything we’d achieved so far and threatened the very existence of our fledgling IPOD. The issue continued to bedevil the process, until finally I was able to persuade both sides that there was a potential compromise: keep the issue on the agenda, but deal with it outside the legislative process for now.

I suggested that it was possible to make the election process transparent and trustworthy even though there was no trust in the Commissioners themselves. After much arguing back and forth, this was grudgingly accepted as the temporary compromise position. Malawi’s Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD–M) had faced a similar challenge and dealt with it successfully in this way, so we decided that an exchange visit to learn from their experience would be most worthwhile.

As it turned out, the trip was indeed worth the investment. Delegates consulted not only with their counterparts, but also with civil society and with the Malawi Electoral Commission. Back home, IPOD adopted many of the processes discussed. For example, ballot papers were inspected in the British factories where they were printed, and were followed from the aircraft that brought them into Uganda, right to the constituency offices. Indeed, a trustworthy process was possible despite lack of trust in the commission.

Getting the pre-election agenda adopted by Parliament was another big and unexpected hurdle. A major limitation as an informal dialogue platform is that we cannot pass legislative changes, only Parliament can. As IPOD is made up of all the parties in Parliament, I expected our reform proposals to be adopted without much difficulty ... but it turned out to be anything but simple. Among other things the process was complicated by the state of the relationship between the party representatives and their parliamentary caucuses, as well as by the proximity to party primary elections.

IPOD needed wider buy-in for its proposals if we were to have any success. To this end we engaged Parliament directly by approaching the Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. I found that even this was not without its challenges: the fact that our

dialogue had begun so close to the elections meant that we had missed the window for making a presentation to the Committee and that they were busy consolidating the various presentations they'd already heard. Fortunately I was able to secure a special meeting for IPOD through senior individuals among our members. A team of representatives from all six parties attended this meeting, rather than just the Secretariat, because we were aware that it was important to palpably demonstrate our united position to the Committee.

The feedback was positive. The Committee appreciated that all the parties in Parliament had found agreement. They were greatly impressed, and thanked us for being the only organization that had taken the trouble to actually draft the legislation we were proposing, and provide justification for the changes.

In anticipation of the coming debate in the Parliament, and after consulting with several political leaders and the IPOD Council, we decided to also apprise all Members of Parliament (MPs) of our proposals by placing copies in their pigeonholes.

Despite all these steps, many of the changes IPOD proposed were still rejected. This was a real disappointment to me after all of the time, energy and effort spent ensuring agreement. Why had it happened? From observing the debate on the various bills I discovered that one cause lay in the gap between some of the IPOD member parties and their parliamentary caucuses. This was a crucial missing link that had to be bridged. My strategy is now to ensure that IPOD builds relations directly with the caucuses so that they will already be on board with our legislative proposals by the time we submit them.

Another reason our process was so vexed was the timing: we embarked on the negotiations just a few months out from the election and this meant it was a time of party primaries and the consequent jockeying for upcoming party positions. This impacted on the unity behind the party caucus positions on proposals, as some individuals had to be careful not to be seen to portray a position of weakness to potential supporters in these primaries – something opponents could easily exploit. Consideration of the electoral cycle is important in determining when to negotiate such important changes.

Cooperation, consultation, contestation and committees: the post-election agenda

Setting up the post-election agenda kicked off in July 2011 with a post-election workshop. Once again we drew on the experience of our neighbours, this time from Tanzania's post-election workshops. Known as the Healing of Wounds, these workshops were held after their tough 2005 elections to reflect on electoral management processes, conflict mediation and the letting off of steam.

We wanted to generate a wider ownership of our post-election workshop agenda and so included a bigger range of stakeholders than usual. Representatives from civil society, faith-based organizations, security agencies, the international community and the Electoral Commission all participated. Together we reflected on future priority areas for electoral reform.

The workshop was followed by another process of consultation, this time conducted by a sub-committee comprising one member from each party, plus myself. These were high-level consultations involving the Presidents of the parties and/or key members of their National Executive Committees. The consultations aimed to ensure buy-in of the proposed reforms and to expand the agenda to include constitutional, institutional and socio-economic issues. We also sought input on what modalities, structures and process we could use to discuss and find consensus on these agenda items, as well as on a few of the issues themselves, such as the electoral system, for example.

Once this round of consultation was complete, the next step was to organize an IPOD dialogue on the agenda. The first thing I did was to organize another sub-committee to prepare a draft and it was this we submitted to the IPOD plenary. I particularly remember how difficult this plenary became, peppered as it was with contentious issues. The opposition parties wanted to be allowed to hold public demonstrations without hindrance, while the NRM countered by saying that the leaders of such protests needed to act within the law and ensure that the general public would not be endangered. Most controversial perhaps was the issue of Presidential term limits and the changing of the Electoral Commissioners. There were many such points and it took time and effort to get all sides to accept that this was just a preliminary list of issues we were trying to forge. In fact, we had to hold several plenary sessions in order to reach consensus. In general the route to consensus was onerous. Once we had reached agreement in an IPOD plenary, representatives had to take this back to their parties for consultation, input and discussion and then report back to the next IPOD plenary. This was really time consuming and very frustrating because we continually had to chase representatives for their party positions and often had to move deadlines for submissions again and again.

In between plenary sessions, I met with several key individuals from the member parties to strategize on how we could get the process going without harming their party interests. Here we hit on the idea of separating the agenda into short-term, more easily attainable agenda items, and long-term items that would require extensive debate and consultation.

The process that followed was long and convoluted. Full of sub-committees, meetings, plenary sessions, sudden (although not unexpected) outbursts, positioning and counter-positioning, and two more regional exchange visits. IPOD, however, came to agree on four main agenda areas: law and order management; electoral reforms; constitutional reforms; and party funding. We issued a press statement to ensure the agreement

received wide publicity and that member parties could not back out of it later without egg on their face. At the time of writing IPOD was about to hold a plenary to consider a detailed version of this agenda, including timelines, goals and expected outcomes.

Looking back

This exciting and sometimes frustrating journey with IPOD has taught me many valuable lessons, mostly to do with seeing and building connections: connections with people, connections with processes and connections with things. Here are several tips summarizing some of what I've learned:

1. *Timing*

The timing of an inter-party dialogue process kick-off can have serious consequences. Consideration of the phase in which a country finds itself along the electoral cycle should inform timing, wherever possible. Try to avoid beginning on the cusp of an election. Of course the timing of an intervention may not be up to NIMD at all, but rather be in answer to an urgent call from the political parties in the country concerned. In such a situation, try to use the less-than-ideal timing to your advantage. Use it, for example, to put more pressure on the process for a quick delivery of results, as we did, but be careful to ensure that there is sufficient ownership of the outcomes, especially ownership by the party caucuses.

2. *Arranging exchange visits*

Exchange visits (both at the start of the process and as challenges arise) to confer with and learn from peers are a valuable weapon in the arsenal of an inter-party platform. A visit to a country with a NIMD multiparty platform that has faced similar challenges can provide the necessary impetus to push a tentative country into forming a platform. It can also cut through many of the challenges that need to be negotiated before the start of an IPD, simply because the host country may hold answers to these challenges.

3. *Trust building*

Ensure the various elements of the dialogue's structure and operations are geared toward building trust between the member parties. Trust is the basis for these parties to dialogue and to make concessions on their demands in order to reach consensus. The confidentiality of the inter-party dialogue process must be secured, lest it become a point-scoring rather than consensus-seeking exercise.

Having a neutral facilitator trusted by all sides is a key aspect of building trust in the platform. While it is important to foster personal relationships between the individual party representatives in the process, it is equally important that personal relationships are forged between the Executive Director, the Secretariat and party representatives. This is central to building an understanding between the Secretariat and the representatives –

an understanding that will enable the Secretariat to more easily figure out how to make a breakthrough in intractable situations.

Alongside the conventional trust building strategies, I have also employed informal trust building methods; some might even call them unorthodox. Both before and during a dialogue, I identify the opinion leaders, the pivotal people around the table. Having done this, I nurture a more intense relationship with them. This involves an investment in both time and social activities. With some it means meeting them in places of social interaction, often leaving in the early hours of the morning, but with a greater understanding of each other as people. We talk about our personal opinions on whatever issues are pertinent, and sound out alternatives together over drinks. With others, it involves asking for strategy ideas to move things forward, making them realize that they are critical actors in moving us toward an acceptable compromise.

4. *Alliance building*

Alliance building is vitally important in getting the agenda issues adopted into policy and legislation. This is especially so for parliamentary committees and party caucuses. Agreement in IPOD alone (despite having the governing party and opposition parliamentary parties as members) cannot guarantee the passage of these agreements into legislation. Parliament and the individual MPs also need to be convinced of the importance of these reforms. Furthermore, civil society is a major stakeholder and can be a powerful ally in convincing lawmakers to pass these reforms.

5. *Maintaining a low profile*

What works for me, in the thick of the dialogue process, is to influence the direction of the talks in a way that is as unobtrusive as possible. This is important for a number of reasons. First, you do not want to lose the reputation of neutrality because this is critical for a facilitator who has to carry the confidence of all sides. Second, the political parties need to be assured that this is indeed a dialogue between them and that the final agreement is truly theirs.

Since IPOD deals with so many situations where parties' positions are far apart from each other, I focus on trying to find compromise as the debates ensue. Because of the personal relationships I have built with different delegates, I can sometimes inject issues into the dialogue through these individuals. Sometimes someone would say something that would point in the direction of a compromise, but would not frame it in the best way. I carefully compose it in my own mind, and then move to one of these individuals and whisper my suggestion in his or her ear. Other times, I'd write a note and pass it on to the individual concerned. My formulation was then reflected as the party position rather than as my own. This strategy helps move the process forward while still maintaining a strong sense of ownership by the parties. Indeed, at some point individuals began to seek out my opinion in such circumstances rather than waiting for me to make the first move.

6. Setting realistic expectations and achievable tasks

Set realistic expectations and ensure that the agenda is not overburdened, especially at the start of the process, otherwise it will be nipped in the bud. My approach was to find some early success in order to build trust and confidence in the process. We distinguished between short-term issues that could be tackled immediately and those that were longer-term and required more intensive dialogue. These longer-term, trickier ones were phased in as we made progress with the short-term issues.

Another technique was to convince parties that just because a matter was being discussed, it did not automatically mean the proposing party would get everything they wanted. Dialogue is a matter of give and take, of bargaining and ultimately about looking at the best interests of the country. There are always different ways of addressing the same issue.

7. Working in small groups

My experience in the South African transition taught me that it is easier to achieve initial consensus working in smaller work committees, so we often divide into sub-committees, each tasked with a particular issue.

More than just paperwork, more than public posturing, more than a nice slogan – Putting Uganda First is the work of our Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue. There will be more moments of success, more moments of extreme challenge, of confusion, doubt and perhaps even of despair, but we have seen it can be done and know it must continue in order for Uganda to succeed with democracy.

Shaun Mackay

NIMD Representative in Uganda

Connecting the dots: the power of inter-party dialogue in retrospect

by Shaun Mackay, NIMD representative in Uganda and Karijn de Jong, NIMD Senior Programme Manager

Facilitating a dialogue among political élites, especially political parties, is no easy task and is fraught with challenges. Based on participatory analyses of the stories of five Executive Directors (EDs), this chapter summarizes how specific challenges were successfully turned around, what techniques were used to do this and which skills were essential in making them work. Although each dialogue process is at a different stage of evolution – some are just starting up, while others have been in existence for some time (see the five phases of an IPD process set out in the introductory chapter on page 7 – a number of common techniques and themes have emerged from these stories. Some of the techniques included in this volume are informal techniques that usually escape documentation because they challenge convention. Some of the techniques described form part of NIMD's standard modus operandi, while others come from intuitive responses in the heat of the moment, from experiences forged in situations elsewhere, or from colleagues who have encountered similar scenarios. A caveat is appropriate here: the lessons, tools and techniques presented in this volume are not meant as a blueprint. It is up to the reader to adapt and use them in a way appropriate to his or her own circumstances.

Securing inter-personal and inter-party trust

Dialogue platforms stand or fall on the levels of trust between their member parties. H.E. Benjamin Mkapa, the former President of Tanzania, captured this predicament succinctly when he said: 'the biggest obstacle to democratic development and stability in Africa today is lack of trust among political parties'. Yet building trust between political opponents who often view each other as 'the enemy' is perhaps the most difficult undertaking that any ED is tasked with. Trust building is not an event but rather a long term process.

It requires tremendous effort, ongoing investment and continuous nurturing. It involves building inter-personal and inter-party relationships over an extended period of time. Trust is also fluid: it can, for instance, decrease almost instantaneously as a result of political events outside the control of the ED. As a result, EDs have to be both flexible and creative in their approach to this difficult and delicate process.

Creating trust between the individuals and political parties involved is critical to the development and consolidation of an inter-party dialogue (IPD).²⁰ The stories are full of examples of how important the creation of this kind of trust is in keeping the process together and moving it forward, as well as the many challenges encountered in both building and maintaining this trust.

Three particular techniques for securing inter-personal and inter-party trust are described below.

1. Maintain confidentiality

One of the most common features of all five IPDs discussed in this volume is that of confidentiality. All IPDs operate as closed-door dialogue platforms rather than in full public view. The IPDs hold their meetings in private and no member is allowed to make the content of their deliberations public during the process of analysis and negotiations. Outcomes are only publicly communicated once agreement has been reached. Despite this, leakages do occur, and the ED has to be able to manage consequent fallout. Some critics regard this as secretive and elitist and see the IPDs as a club for the happy few. This is certainly a disadvantage, but one that is easily outweighed by the advantages. Without confidentiality, politicians are reluctant to share their opinions freely with each other. Without confidentiality, politicians are reluctant to make the compromises necessary to effect a consensus, for fear of being seen as weak by

the electorate. It is important not to underestimate the impact this can have on a political party vying for power: without confidentiality politicians are likely to 'play to the gallery' in order to score points against their opponents. Indeed, confidentiality allows them to focus more on substance, and less on their opponent. This in turn builds trust between individuals.

2. Secure early results and quick wins

Reaching consensus early in the life of the IPD is good for everyone's morale and confidence, and is more likely to be achieved if you begin with less controversial issues rather than the intractable ones. As illustrated by the Tanzania and Uganda stories, early consensus creates the necessary momentum for further concessions around more difficult issues by instilling buy-in to the process, confidence that it can deliver and by promoting inter-party trust.

It is often, although not always, up to the governing party to ignite this inter-party trust by making some gesture of goodwill. For example, Ghana's ruling party made a generous proposal regarding party funding during their first platform meeting, and this helped the opposition to trust it was serious about engaging in a genuine dialogue process. Such gestures are not easily come by and where they do occur are usually the result of an arduous and labour-intensive process.

3. Promote personal relationships

Social gatherings and learning events provide non-threatening opportunities for members to get to know and understand each other better. Knowing each other socially provides a firmer foundation for understanding each other politically. Personal relationships between representatives of the different parties allow them to more easily internalize and understand each other's fears and aspirations. It allows them to move beyond the obvious and understand the deeper needs that lie at the root of a particular position or demand. While some might consider social occasions to be too frivolous for a serious inter-party dialogue process, they have been used to great effect by several IPDs, including Malawi's, to move the process forward. Moreover, some EDs have de-

scribed how they have used social occasions to form a stronger social bond between themselves and individual members of an IPD. The formation of these social bonds lends itself to an easier interaction between EDs and IPD representatives. And as the Uganda story illustrates, social interactions can be used to personally engage individual delegates on serious issues, in a more relaxed atmosphere. This is particularly important when issues appear intractable.

Workshops and seminars provide opportunities for members to engage with one another, not in debate or decision making, but in learning new skills and information together. Although aimed at building capacity within the political parties, the Tanzania story highlights how cross-party activities have helped to break down barriers and build trust between the parties. These activities allow for members of parties who would not normally interact with each other to get to know each other and thus break down perceptions of each other as the enemy, rather than as political competitors. Workshops and gatherings organized as part of the African Regional Programme have the advantage of taking members out of their home environments and including members from a number of IPDs. Peer-to-peer learning events, such as exchange visits, are perhaps among the most successful in fostering inter-personal and inter-party relationships, within and between countries.

Securing trust in the IPD itself

Trust between people and between member parties is essential but the inter-party dialogue itself must also be trustworthy. This is particularly vital in instances where enmity between parties is rife and where individuals cannot be trusted. The stories show how trust can be built in the dialogue platform and its processes, by focusing on the following four key organizational elements:

1. Rules of engagement

Establish clear and transparent rules of engagement and record these in a formal document. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), trust deed, constitution or other agreement which sets out the structure, modalities and rules of

engagement of the platform helps clarify expectations and create trust in the process itself, even where parties are extremely wary of trusting their opponents. This fundamental requirement is best demonstrated in the Kenyan story where the ED relied heavily on rules and regulations to bring warring members into fruitful conversation during the post-election crisis of 2007–08.

2. The Chairperson

Decide not only on who the Chairperson will be, but on how this decision will be made. Clarity around the process for deciding who chairs the IPD helps create trust. Any uncertainties or disagreements around this can, and have, threatened IPDs' very existence. There is no one-size-fits-all solution – each IPD had to take its particular political environment into account when choosing an approach.

CMD-Kenya elects its Chairperson bi-annually from among the members of the platform in a majority vote. Elections, however, can be divisive and a less orthodox approach may be more appropriate where there are already high levels of animosity and mistrust. In CMD-Malawi, the position of Chairperson rotates alphabetically on a quarterly basis, so that each member party has the opportunity to hold it for three months. This simple but ingenious procedure provides predictability, transparency and fairness. It also cuts out the possible anxiety and divisiveness of an election. However, it does lead to a loss of continuity and this in turn can inhibit the pace of an IPD's progress.

A more unusual approach is to be found in Ghana where the ruling party always chairs the IPD. The country's unique historical and political factors have no doubt played a role in opposition parties accepting an arrangement most IPDs would find difficult to accept. These factors include Ghana's de-facto two-party system which makes it unlikely that any one of the two parties (the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party) will chair over several electoral terms; and a less fractious political system where the two main parties tend to alternate power and have had the experience of governing and being in opposition

and are therefore able to appreciate issues from both perspectives.

This approach has many advantages: it ensures certainty, and transparency, enhances trust and continuity over a longer period and, perhaps most importantly, makes good sense, since the ruling party will have to own the outcome of any dialogue and has the onus of pushing it through the legislature or other policy-making organ.

3. Neutral broker

Finding the right ED who serves as the de facto dialogue facilitator is a crucial factor in the success of a multiparty platform. A key requirement for the job is that they are accepted as non-partisan brokers by all parties.

The CMDs in Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania found individuals that all sides trusted to serve as EDs. In Uganda, an ED was brought in from outside the country because the political situation was so volatile and potential host organizations and individuals capable of the job were perceived to be politically aligned at the time that the platform was established. In Ghana an independent organization, rather than an individual, was chosen to spearhead the initiative.

The stories suggest that, as the facilitators of the dialogue, EDs have to be seen as non-partisan if they are to engender and sustain parties trust in them. But EDs by their nature often hold strong views on issues, and depending on the relationship they have with the members they may be able to influence the outcome of deliberations. However, caution has to be exercised, as visibly pushing these views may not be the best tactic to use in every situation, especially if they coincide with those of a particular party around the table. The parties' perception of the ED and of the IPD itself will be influenced by how forcefully the ED intervenes. This is important because the deliberations are essentially between the political parties, and favouring the argument of one side or the other should be avoided. The Uganda story illustrates that there are ways of exerting influence without doing so overtly. Of course, the most obvious way that an ED can exert influence is to

offer alternatives based on research conducted on specific issues for the dialogue process.

4. The venue

Choose a safe and neutral venue for meetings. This may appear at first to be a fairly innocuous and inconsequential factor. However, lack of trust in the venue can be the undoing of an inter-party dialogue. It would, for instance, be unsustainable to hold the dialogue in the offices of one of the political parties because of all the suspicions this may arouse. Furthermore if IPD meetings always took place in one party's office, that party may be tempted to exploit the situation by claiming to be the originator or driver of the process, thus gaining political advantage over the other parties in the eyes of the public. Without assurance of the neutrality of a venue, there may be much trepidation on the part of political parties to openly participate in the dialogue platform.

Timing

In general, the agenda setting and negotiating activities of an inter-party dialogue should be closely connected to its country's electoral cycle in order to harness the window of opportunity between elections, and to insulate its dialogue from the divisiveness and emotions that elections tend to evoke.

It is difficult for politicians to discuss the structural reforms needed to improve the performance of democracy with elections on the horizon. Instead, issues such as levelling the playing field and the fair conduct of elections take centre stage. Similarly, since elections are fiercely contested, a cooling off period is necessary straight after elections. Thereafter IPDs can play a useful role in facilitating election post-mortems, reviewing shortcomings that surfaced during the election period. It is only after that, and for the short two years that follow before election fever picks up again, that a window of opportunity opens for politicians to move beyond electoral competition and look for accommodation on structural issues which require reform. If these issues are taken up in a timely way, the results can be incorporated into the parties' platforms for the next elections,

enhancing the chances of implementation of agreed reforms after the elections.

However, it is not always desirable to begin an IPD too close to elections. Some platforms have been initiated on the eve of an election, with serious consequences for core processes such as setting the agenda. Setting the agenda for an IPD is important since it is meant to guide and shape the whole dialogue process. Uganda did not have the luxury of a full strategic planning or agenda-setting process because it began too close to an election. Instead it had to contend with an urgent, election-related agenda first.

Managing expectations

Managing politicians' high expectations of the IPD becomes a key preoccupation of an ED, especially after the agenda setting has been completed and the dialogue on agenda items commences. Most parties expect instant normalization of the political process just because the dialogue process has begun. However, such a change often requires a complex and long-term process of legislative and/or constitutional reforms. Managing expectations is a challenging process that requires both structural (organizational) and personal intervention. Even with these interventions, there is little guarantee that expectations will be adequately contained. Yet failure to manage them can lead to the collapse of an IPD, as parties begin to lose faith in its ability to deliver. The stories suggest two key ways of managing high expectations:

First, it is important to start with a minimalist agenda containing issues that are less controversial so that you have a better chance of finding early consensus. Prioritize the agenda into short-term, medium-term, and long-term issues. Each of these builds on and lays the foundation of trust for the next set of priorities.

Second, it is critical to keep all role-players informed and up to date. There must be constant communication between the IPD and the Secretaries General, and the leadership structures of the parties, in order to temper expectations of

what might be possible in the short term. This flow of information tends to bring a sense of realism to the expectations as the Secretaries General and National Executive Committees of the parties are able to follow the deliberations and are made aware of the constraints being faced in the IPD. Where stalemates do occur in a dialogue, the search for consensus can be elevated to a higher level by, for example, asking the Secretaries General or party Chairs to sit together and propose alternatives until consensus is reached.

Compromise and consensus

Accommodation and reconciliation among political élites are crucial for the consolidation of democracy: this is the cement that holds a democracy together. Decisions made by consensus require a participatory process in which all stakeholders have an input. The goal is to generate as much agreement as possible so that the resolution which finally emerges is one which seeks to accommodate the views of all stakeholders. It is a process whose outcomes tend to be jointly owned.

Securing consensus and agreement on the reform agenda ensures that there is wider buy-in from the critical stakeholders, both within and outside of the IPD. This means that in order to be successful, an IPD must achieve consensus within the platform itself, as well as within member parties own structures, including their National Executive Committees and/or Central Executive Committees. IPDs also need to secure agreement on the reform agenda from Parliament and other legislatures as this is where consensus positions are turned into policy or legislation. Lastly, it is also imperative for success that IPDs secure support for their agenda from a wider group of stakeholders, including civil society and the electorate. Securing consensus at these three levels will be further elaborated below.

1. Securing consensus within the IPD

One of the most critical steps in ensuring consensus in the IPD is to make the agenda-setting process participatory. At the minimum, all member political parties must have a stake in

shaping that agenda or reform item. One method of developing the agenda in a participatory manner is through a strategic planning process. Tanzania developed its strategic plan in a rather unique way by giving each member party specific components to develop and ensuring that the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was given to the governing party. This technique does two things: first, it ensures that the governing party itself seriously engages the most pressing reform issues and, as the originator of this analysis, has a vested interest in seeing the reforms pursued in the IPD and the legislature. Second, the participatory nature of the exercise ensures that every party makes an equal contribution to the development of the plan and thus has ownership of it in a very tangible way. However, in this approach participation is confined to the member political parties.

An even more participatory method is that taken by Kenya and Ghana. It requires the input of a wide range of stakeholders from across the nation. While political parties provide the initial ideas, these are then taken to the nation for its input. The upshot is a widely-owned agenda. In essence, this input on the agenda from a wider stakeholder community will already have ignited the dialogue around it in the public space. While it was possible in Kenya and Ghana, it should be appreciated that this approach might not necessarily be workable in other countries.

The way in which decisions are made in an IPD also serves to build consensus and ownership around the outcome. All five of the IPDs described in this volume make their decisions through building consensus – all member parties must agree to a decision.

Consensus decision making forces the parties to compromise. It is most often a situation in which no party gets exactly what it started out demanding, but one that arrives at a common position that all can subscribe to and all can own. A shared consensus is generated across political parties in order for all to take ownership of the decisions and, in so doing, ease their passage into legislation or policy. The process of building this

consensus in itself enhances trust between the politicians, as they exchange one compromise for another. In truth, the consensus rule often means that reaching a decision is infinitely harder than by simple majority voting. It often requires considerable time and effort to secure such consensus. However, once it is secured the outcome is more readily owned by the parties.

Simple majority voting on issues does not present an attractive incentive for ruling parties to participate as they are often significantly outnumbered by opposition parties, while the consensus model is not always appealing to opposition parties, who may be reluctant to give up their advantage-in-number. This is well illustrated in the Malawi story where the governing party was initially reluctant to come on board because it would have been outnumbered five to one by the opposition parties and thus in danger of being outvoted on every issue. It cost the ED considerable time and effort to convince the ruling party that decision making by consensus would negate the opposition advantage in the platform. Likewise the ID spent a great deal of time convincing the opposition parties that finding common ground would be infinitely more difficult if issues were merely decided by voting, as there would be little incentive for this.

2. Securing consensus at political party level

It is not enough to have consensus and buy-in among the party representatives in the inter-party dialogue. If the member parties are to truly own these outcomes then they need to be internalized by their own structures, including their National Executive Committees and/or Central Executive Committees.

Without internal party consensus, the decisions of an IPD may be disowned by the parties down the line. At the same time, building internal party consensus requires constant feedback between the IPD and party formations on the ongoing dialogue. However, communication between the party representatives at the IPD and the parties that sent them cannot be relied upon and is frequently inadequate. The Secretariat can help ensure that party leaders are informed of IPD activities and

decisions, debates issues and ultimately buy into the IPD process by issuing regular updates, minutes, newsletters and facilitating internal discussion forums.

Once there is buy-in at the leadership level, it is easier for parties to publicly commit to the outcomes of the dialogue. This can be done through joint press statements or conferences where the parties' leadership (normally Secretaries General) commit to these outcomes in writing. This serves to assure the general public that the parties speak with one voice on the issue and also allows the public to hold the parties accountable for sticking to these decisions. In short, it makes it more difficult for a party to back out at a later stage.

Additionally, there is often the need for the Secretariat to engage parliamentary caucuses, as a disjunction between caucuses and their parties is common. These are two important gaps that need to be bridged if these consensus proposals are to muster the support of the legislature. As in the Ghana story, a process of consensus building around this agenda must be put in place.

3. Securing consensus at wider stakeholder levels

When an IPD reaches consensus on an agenda item – or as in the Ghana case, the agenda itself – this is only half the battle won. The other half lies in ensuring that this consensus position is turned into policy or legislation. This means getting the legislature to approve the proposed reforms. In theory this should be easy for the IPD, since the political parties represented in the legislature are also IPD members. However, experience (for example, as evidenced by the Uganda story) tells us otherwise. Despite IPOD having agreed on several electoral amendments, not all of these were accepted by Parliament.

The Ghana story tells how an entire agenda (developed through the Ghana Political Parties' Programme, the GPPP) can be incorporated into the national development plan by building a nationwide consensus around it through regional and national consultations. This consensus was a wide one, encompassing as it did, so many

categories of stakeholders, including those in Parliament and other legislatures. In itself, this nationwide consensus also created pressure for Government acceptance of the agenda.

The Ghanaian agenda-setting process was closely linked to the formulation of a national development plan. One of the experts who worked with the GPPP during this process was appointed as a member of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), and another was appointed its Chairperson. It was not surprising, therefore, that in the drafting of the national development agenda, key aspects of the GPPP plan were incorporated. The lesson here is to draw key opinion makers and elders into the process so that they can be used as resource persons during the process, and as ambassadors to support the emerging reform agenda, and to push the agenda in other important forums.

Other methods of bridging the gaps and ensuring wider participation are as follows:

An informed and effective dialogue requires policy as its basis yet there is little space for policy issues to be discussed in many member parties. The IPD could initiate, support and facilitate regular policy forums in each party in order to ensure that time is dedicated for the executive and the policy analysts to discuss issues of policy, keep them abreast of the developments in the IPD, and facilitate their input.

District dialogues and debates, where parties and members of the public meet to discuss agenda issues and feed their opinions into the process, is another effective method of promoting participation.

A good relationship and regular communication between the IPDs and the parliamentary caucuses of the member parties helps keep them abreast of the dialogue and allows for their input on these matters. This ensures that they will already be in support of the amendments when these are sent to Parliament.

IPDs could also seriously consider forming ongoing relationships with the Parliamentary committees that will be dealing with the suggested legislative changes before they are debated and voted on in Parliament. Once again, this is designed to inform and build consensus for the time when the agenda item gets to Parliament. Since these committees will have to present the suggested reforms to Parliament, having them on board from the start is a good strategy to ensure that they support these reforms.

Key incentives

It is important to understand what attracts political parties and what keeps them motivated to participate in inter-party dialogues. The stories reveals several incentives:

1. Financial support

There is no doubt that financial support provided to political parties plays a meaningful role in IPD successes. Financial support is an important incentive for the parties to join the IPD and often keeps them there, even during difficult times. There are many reasons for this but an important one is that no public funding is provided to political parties in the majority of the countries featured in this volume. Instead, individual party leaders often have to fund these parties themselves, leading to the 'personalization' of some parties. Extracting funding through membership contributions and fees has very limited application in countries where the majority of the population is struggling to survive. Whatever financial support is given to these political parties for capacity building is sorely needed and much appreciated.

While this support is a significant incentive for the platforms' success, it is by no means the only factor and IPDs can survive without it. The Kenya story tells us that although the bilateral support provided to member parties was important at the start of CMD-Kenya, the subsequent legal prohibition of such funding did not lead to the collapse of the IPD, as might otherwise have been anticipated.

2. Being part of an important institution

Participation, leverage and prestige are powerful incentives. The fact that the IPD is the meeting place where important reforms that will influence the nature of politics in the country are negotiated is another incentive for parties to join and remain committed to the forum. EDs have emphasized that belonging to the IPD gives member parties leverage in reforming and resolving issues of national concern. In Kenya, as the IPD progressed and began to notch up successes, the prestige and usefulness of belonging to the forum began to outweigh the financial support that was given to the parties. The ED recounts that parties began to

feel that if they were not part of CMD-Kenya then they would not be able to participate in the important and historic agreements that were emerging from it.

Furthermore, platforms can also be used to promote the interests of political parties as a group, in much the same way that trade unions collectively promote the rights of workers. For instance, political parties can use the platform to push for state funding for political parties in order to ensure the strengthening of parties and the multiparty system of governance.

3. The multiparty identity of NIMD

As evidenced by the Tanzania story, the fact that NIMD is an organization which was founded by multiple political parties which seek to support and strengthen other political parties is also an important incentive for parties to join IPDs. Political parties appreciate the fact that this is support from political peers who understand the challenges of strengthening political parties as a means of consolidating multiparty democracy. NIMD's reputation as an impartial organization has in part been directed by this multiparty constituency that it represents – so it cannot afford to favour any one party.

4. Ownership of the IPD and its agenda

Perhaps one of the most important incentives is the fact that these IPDs are operated on the basis of partnership (between the member parties and NIMD) and ownership (by the political parties of the IPD and its agenda). The IPD agenda is driven by needs identified by the parties rather than being imposed by NIMD. It is often the case that a donor organization imposes an agenda and expects the parties to implement it if they wish to get support. NIMD's approach is a unique selling point and is greatly appreciated by political parties.

5. Peer-to-peer learning

Peer-to-peer learning opportunities are an important incentive for political parties since they provide members with the opportunity to learn from other countries and to connect with sister parties in these countries. All five stories are replete with

testimonies of the usefulness of these regional peer-to-peer exchange visits. The exchanges, part of the African Regional Programme (ARP), are aimed at political peers sharing experiences on common challenges that confront them in order to learn from each other and so avoid the need for each IPD to 're-invent the wheel'. Instead, the lessons learned during these exchanges can be readily adapted for use by the visitors. Furthermore, exchanges function as a source of inspiration, motivation, peer pressure and guidance among the IPDs.

Exchange visits can be useful at various stages of the IPDs. The Ugandan story illustrates the important role they can play in convincing warring parties to become part of a forum whose benefits they are yet to be convinced of. Choosing a country that has similar politico-historic parallels is important so that relevant experience can be shared and appropriate lessons can be learned. An ED can explain all the benefits of belonging to such a forum to potential member parties, but there is nothing quite as convincing as seeing the results of such a forum in action! The act of political peers – practitioners rather than academics – talking to each other about the challenges that they have confronted at the coalface of politics and how they have resolved them is crucial.

Peer-to-peer exchange visits continue to remain relevant throughout the life of the IPDs as they are confronted by other challenges. Where an IPD in another country has successfully dealt with such a challenge, it makes sense to take the lessons from this into account in attempting to deal with this challenge in one's own situation. The Ugandan account of how the IPD handled the lack of credibility the Electoral Commission had in the eyes of opposition parties after an exchange visit to Malawi is an instructive illustration of the efficacy and usefulness of these peer-to-peer exchange visits.

Supporting structures

Appropriate support structures, such as a Secretariat and sub committees, are necessary in order to ensure successful dialogue and eventual reform.

1. Secretariat

A neutral and professional Secretariat is vitally important, yet can be difficult to establish. Some IPDs overcame the challenge of establishing not only a non-partisan, but also an effective and efficient Secretariat by asking an existing NGO to play this role. In Ghana, for example, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) was selected by all parties because it was a well-respected, national think tank with a non-partisan reputation and a proven skills-set. It is not always easy, however, to find an organization with a (sufficiently) neutral profile that is acceptable to all parties. As the Kenyan story illustrates, the parties may also be reluctant to place themselves 'under' a civil society organization on principal. In these instances IPDs are better off establishing their own Secretariats.

The Secretariat is responsible for providing both administrative and technical support. Administratively this includes structuring and calling meetings; setting the agenda; recording and sending minutes to the parties; issuing press statements and arranging press conferences on progress within the IPD; arranging policy briefs and debates on important issues where wider input might be sought on an issue; setting out the issues (including the roadmap for the agenda) for discussion and finalization by the parties; arranging for input and dialogue with Government Ministers and officials as a means of resolving burning issues; and generally ensuring the welfare of members in order to secure a conducive atmosphere for dialogue.

On the technical side, it includes facilitating the dialogue through various programmatic and other interventions such as training, workshops and policy development; commissioning research papers on the agenda issues; arranging for experts to provide input for the platform; and facilitating the dialogue at the various levels, including at the level of party leadership, where necessary.

2. Sub-committees

When the dialogue on the agenda begins, structures need to be put in place to ensure that the process is able to move logically. Many IPDs create a number of instruments and structures

dedicated to this process. Several have created sub-committees to deal with specific thematic areas, and the Secretariat must stand ready, where necessary, to provide technical backup in the form of literature, research or expert input to facilitate the task of these sub-committees. Moreover, the ED and his or her team must provide the backstop to help draft the outcomes in a way that makes sense of the discussions and reflects the consensus reached in these sub-committees. Sufficient time needs to be built into the process to allow for the party representatives to consult with their principals on the ever-changing compromise positions that may inevitably be required; the party must be taken along at all times.

The sub-committees then bring their initial findings and recommendations to a plenary of the IPD for discussion, amendment, consensus and adoption. The work done by the sub-committee should ease the work of the larger plenary groups and make consensus on the final outcome a bit easier.

3. Concluding remarks

The five country stories presented in this volume underscore the fact that democratization is a process that naturally entails undertaking political reforms that are often highly contested. If not well managed, such reforms may not only be protracted but also bring about conflict and jeopardize the very process of democratization and development.

While there are a wide range of actors that participate and have stakes in a reform process, we know from the experiences presented here that political parties are central. Of course, this may not be surprising: political parties are the bedrock of contemporary representative democracy. They not only shape Parliament, where reforms are adopted as pieces of legislations or policies, but also influence other equally important institutions such as the executive and electoral management bodies. Thus, as ably demonstrated in the stories presented here, facilitating inter-party dialogue, consensus and mutual understanding in the competitive arena of national politics is critical for managing political conflicts and in regaining

citizens' confidence in a country's democratic system. It furthermore proves to be an innovative and effective strategy for contributing to democratic consolidation and development.

As we conclude our stories – and cognizant of the fact that inter-party dialogue is probably here to stay – we would like to make one point clear. This very important process calls for patience, perseverance and support. To make inter-party dialogue processes work, flexibility and a degree of risk-taking is imperative. Furthermore, embarking on a process of inter-party dialogue will always be the beginning of a long journey that will require a long-term perspective from all involved. There are no quick fixes in these processes. Once they work, the rates of return can be impressive as the five stories in this volume demonstrate.



Group photo during the last storytelling workshop. Standing from left to right: Karijn de Jong, Augustine Magolwondo, Eugenia Boutylkova and Njeri Kabeberi. Sitting from left to right: Roel von Meijefeldt, Shaun Mackay and Kizito Tenthani. Other workshop members (not in the picture): Jean Mensa and Daniel Loya. 10 October 2013, Wassenaar, the Netherlands

²⁰ As explained in the Chapter Innovation in Democracy Support, inter-party dialogue platforms come in different forms and shapes. The NIMD facilitated interparty dialogue platforms have generally become known as Centres for Multiparty Democracy (CMDs) although several countries use different names. In this chapter, we refer to the generic term interparty dialogue (IPD).

Colophon

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