



Final Evaluation of the NIMD Strategic Partnership Dialogue and Dissent programme

Final Report

AUTHORS:

**Mike Zijderduijn
Irma Alpenidze
Raphaël Pouyé**

Contributors:

**Baba Dakono
May Thet Kyaw
Dr Kalewongel Minale
Isaack Otieno**

Photo by [Maarten van den Heuvel](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team is grateful to the partners and staff of NIMD for their cooperation in sharing key documents and information, assisting in organising interviews and online group discussions and actively participating in learning/sense-making events. The evaluation team would also like to express its gratitude to the former NIMD staff who took part in this study for their time, information, and insights, as well as the members of the Internal Steering Committee for overall guidance.

Our special thanks go to the leadership and team of SPDD case country partners NIMD Ethiopia, CMD-K, Mzalendo, NIMD Mali, and MySoP, and international partners EPD and Demo Finland for their invaluable insights and support into case programmes.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1 INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Purpose of the final evaluation	9
1.2 Scope of the final evaluation	9
1.3 Departures from the ToR and limitations	10
1.4 Structure of the report	11
2 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION	12
2.1 Basic facts about the SPDD programme	12
2.2 Theory of change and results framework	14
3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	16
3.1 Evaluation criteria and principles	16
3.2 Data collection, sampling and analysis	17
3.3 Process steps and time schedule	18
4 FINDINGS	20
4.1 Effectiveness and contribution analysis at the country level	20
4.1.1 Effectiveness in delivering outputs	20
4.1.2 Progress towards outcomes at the country level	23
4.1.3 Contribution analysis at the country level	34
4.2 Effectiveness of international L&A	36
4.2.1 Progress towards IL&A outcomes	36
4.2.2 Contribution analysis IL&A	39
4.3 Validity of the theory of change	41
4.3.1 Validity of overall ToC	41
4.3.2 Validity of ToC at the country level	42
4.3.3 Role and scope of the SPDD	43
4.4 Financial efficiency	44
4.5 Sustainability	46
4.6 Effects of external programmatic shocks	48
4.6.1 Effects of AWEPA's demise	48
4.6.2 Effects of COVID-19 pandemic	49
4.7 Internal learning	50
4.8 Quality of partnerships	52
4.8.1 Partners in programme countries	52
4.8.2 International partners	54
4.8.3 MoFA and Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)	55
5 CONCLUSIONS	57
5.1 Overall conclusion	57
5.2 Effectiveness at the country level	57
5.3 Effectiveness of international L&A	59
5.4 Validity of the theory of change	60
5.5 Financial efficiency	61
5.6 Sustainability	61
5.7 Effects of programmatic shocks	62
5.8 Internal learning	62
5.9 Quality of partnerships	63
6 RECOMMENDATIONS	65

Acronyms

AWEPA	Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa
CA	Contribution analysis
CMD-K	Centre for Multiparty Democracy - Kenya
CO	Country Office
COHOM	Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), EC
COM-B	Capacity, opportunity, motivation – behaviour
CSO	Civil society organisation
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEAS	European External Action Service
EECMD	Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy
EKN	Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
EMB	Election management body
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
GPMD	Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy
HLPF	High-level political forum
ICT	Information and communications technology
IL&A	International lobby and advocacy
IMD	Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária
IPOD	Uganda's Inter-Party Organization for Dialogue
K&R	Knowledge and research
L&A	Lobby and advocacy
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
MP	Member of parliament
MS	Member state
MTR	Mid-term review
MySoP	Myanmar School of Politics
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy
NPRC	National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
OH	Outcome harvesting
PEA	Political economy analysis
PME	Planning, monitoring, and evaluation
POMA	Public Order Management Act
PP	Political party
S-A-C	System-actor-culture
ToC	Theory of change
ZI	Zimbabwe Institute

Executive summary

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) together with the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) entered into the Strategic Partnership for Dialogue and Dissent (SPDD) with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) for the 2016-2020 period with the “Conducive Environment for Effective Policy Influencing: the Role of Political Parties and Parliaments” programme. The programme aims to contribute to a conducive environment in which political and civic actors can effectively influence political processes to advocate for inclusive and equitable social change.

This final evaluation takes place in the final year of the SPDD programme, with the primary aim to draw lessons from its performance to benefit future programmes that NIMD and its partners will undertake. In addition, the evaluation serves an accountability purpose by providing an independent assessment of the extent to which the programme has been effective in realising its intended outcomes, as well as the extent to which resources entrusted to the programme have been used efficiently. Besides, the evaluation responds to questions related to the validity of the programme’s theory of change (ToC), the sustainability of results, internal learning, the effects of programmatic shock (i.e. the demise of AWEPA and the COVID-19 pandemic), and the quality of partnerships.

The evaluation builds on findings from the mid-term Review undertaken in 2018 and includes an overall review of programme results in all 14 of its programme countries. Besides, 15 ‘outcome cases’ related to the programme’s core themes of 1) realising multi-party dialogue, 2) participation of women in politics, and 3) capacity building of NIMD’s partners have been subjected to a substantiation and contribution analysis to validate and gain a deeper understanding of the significance of the SPDD programme’s interventions. The evaluation is based on extensive desk study research and interviews with NIMD and partner staff in both the Netherlands and programme countries. A participatory sense-making workshop with NIMD staff took place after the data collection was completed to validate and enrich the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

Based on this, the evaluation **overall concludes that the SPDD has provided a unique and relevant contribution to the Dialogue & Dissent framework**. The SPDD is the only programme that has directly worked with political parties and parliaments, which are critical and essential actors in furthering inclusive democratisation processes. The desk review and outcome cases reveal that the **SPDD has made small but significant contributions towards more pluriform democratic processes**, most notably in the creation and broadening of dialogue mechanisms, while progress towards women’s participation has proved the most challenging. The programme has shown resilience in adapting to changing circumstances, which has benefitted its effectiveness in reaching and influencing political actors, going beyond political parties when necessary. Nevertheless, the complexity of pursuing changes in political systems and behaviour in multiple countries demands modesty in the speed and scale of change and makes it impossible to answer the question of whether the SPDD has made ‘enough’ progress. Besides, **the sustainability of the SPDD results remains vulnerable** and subject to the (changing) will of political actors, which requires a long-term, consistent and repetitive exposure to democratic norms and values, whereby the democracy schools have demonstrated to be a relevant and valuable SPDD intervention.

The **efficiency of programme management has been reasonable and stable**, with a good balance in maintaining financial accountability and respecting the autonomy of partners. Finally, the programme has increasingly invested in learning, resulting in a range of learning effects in terms of improved management and implementation practices at both the central and country level, although the learning function lacks the necessary structure and recognition to be perceived positively by NIMD's own staff.

More specific **conclusions related to the various evaluation criteria** are as follows.

In terms of **effectiveness** at the country level, we observe that **planned outputs are only delivered partly as planned, due to the widely-used practice of adaptive programming**. However, interventions that were deliberately adapted to changing circumstances appear most successful in delivering meaningful results on the road towards desired outcomes. A positive example of this is working more directly with civil society actors to help unlock earlier-stalled political dialogue processes, even though this poses some risk to NIMD's perceived uniqueness of working through political parties.

In terms of **progress towards the system-level change**, the variety in nature and success among country programmes is apparent. Clear progress is observed in terms of the scope and quality of multi-party dialogue in the majority of the 14 programme countries, in different shapes and at different levels (national or sub-national). Another important area of successful system-level improvement in about half of the programme countries is in electoral reforms. In terms of **actor-level change**, the nature and pace of progress substantially differ from country to country, largely determined by the openness and responsiveness of political actors to capacity development interventions. This has led to the insight that the significance and power position of political parties in the political system affect the responsiveness to, and consequently the success of, capacity-building efforts.

Changes in political culture were observed as significant signs of progress in practising constructive dialogue to overcome political disagreements as a better alternative to a more confrontational/polarised dialogue. Another sign of progress was found in the improved dialogue between political actors and civil society representatives. Democracy schools have been instrumental in this respect, as they bring together a group that is subjected to longer-term exposure to democratic norms and values. Making headways towards the broader **participation of women in politics** has been more challenging, although not for the lack of trying. Gender equality is a more prominent programme feature in some countries than in others, caused by different levels of confidence and competence in addressing gender inequality among NIMD programme staff and country partners.

A **significant SPDD contribution can be observed in most outcome cases** that can be small but instrumental, most frequently in the shape of providing timely and capable technical assistance, resources, and facilitation services. This combination of inputs helps to establish the programme as a trustworthy and relevant partner, which is crucial for the willingness of targeted political actors to engage with it. At the same time, the effectiveness of SPDD programme contributions is helped by its ability to remain demand-driven, identifying and using windows of opportunities, and securing endorsement from high-level officials/party leaders.

SPPD's international lobby and advocacy (IL&A) has been effective in giving more prominence to the political dimension in policy frameworks of international development actors, most notably at the EU. The partnership with EDP has been instrumental in this respect. The SPDD programme has been less effective in making progress for this purpose at the UN level or with regional bodies (ECOWAS), with fewer efforts being made than originally planned. Advancement towards creating a link between country-level and IL&A efforts has been limited, partly due to the relatively few resources dedicated to it, and the complexity of influencing internal structures of large multilateral institutions.

The **contribution cases related to the SPDD programme's IL&A efforts confirm the complexity of the context in which these take place** (many actors, multiple interests). The cases also demonstrate that the significance of the SPDD as a key contributor is quite limited given the variety of actors present, except for the aforementioned EPD cooperation. The success of IL&A efforts depends on approaches that are evidently different from those at the country level. The need to operate in broad alliances and the ability to identify and gain access to the key events of others are key to fruitful IL&A.

The overall ToC with the conceptual logic of pursuing system-, actor, and culture-level change in combination remains valid for lasting progress towards multi-party democracy. This ToC also helps in positioning NIMD as a relatively unique actor that is experienced in working with political parties yet willing to redirect its approach when work with political parties becomes stalled. The ToC framework is less suitable for planning and reporting purposes, as it is difficult to categorise specific activities and results in line with only one of these dimensions. NIMD's efforts to introduce actor-based pathways as an operational management tool is seen as a step forward. The contribution cases furthermore show that no single intervention makes a difference on its own, but rather **a context-specific combination of interventions is the key to success.**

Finally, the evaluation team concludes that some **key assumptions underlying the ToC** (i.e. bringing parties together leads to change rules and regulations, which leads to an enlargement of political space) **are too stretched in time** to be tested, while others (e.g. absorption of capacity development efforts) only hold under certain conditions. The assumption that exposure to democratic norms and values changes attitudes and behaviours seems to hold, but mostly when such exposure takes place within an unchanging group over a longer period. Political endorsement by senior officials/party leaders and careful timing are conditions that are likely to facilitate this process.

In terms of **financial efficiency**, the overall budget depletion rate has improved over time, while measures are in place to mitigate the risk of 'spending for spending's sake'. The proportion of direct programme costs is stable and ranges between 75 and 80 per cent of total costs in the 2017-2019 period, which **illustrates reasonable and stable efficiency.** Moreover, cost-conscious financial management is observed in ongoing efforts to harmonise costs between countries, among others by using external standards to set salary scales. These efforts take place in a continuing balancing act by NIMD between the need to maintain control to be accountable and the need to allow freedom and autonomy for rapid adaptive programming to its country partners.

The need for **sustainable change** is embedded in NIMD's multi-dimensional ToC. **Sustainability is an important consideration in NIMD's programme management decisions, even though not often referred to explicitly**, as various programmatic adaptations are undertaken organically following

concerns about the programme's ability to obtain lasting results. NIMD's strategy to increasingly work with its 'own' country offices risks undermining sustainability, although this risk was successfully managed in Georgia and Mozambique by giving space and support to mature into independent like-minded organisations. Nevertheless, these practices are not part of a deliberate partner or exit strategy, which makes the evolution of NIMD support unpredictable.

Besides anchoring results in a local organisation, further sustainability-related conditions include (1) the need for longer-term and/or repetitive exposure to the value of constructive inclusive policy dialogue, and (2) the active engagement of civil society as a political actor and constant advocate for, and reminder of, inclusion and accountability.

In terms of programmatic shocks, the effect of the demise of AWEPA on programme results has been limited, as several NIMD country partners had prior experience in working with parliament, while in other programme countries former AWEPA staff were absorbed by the programme. At the same time, the evaluation team recognises that this conclusion should be nuanced, as it draws a comparison with a hypothetical situation. The **effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were strongest in the second quarter of 2020**. Since then, there have been various signs of programme adaptation and continuation ranging from keeping authorities accountable for the measures taken against the pandemic to making activities Covid-proof by localising them or moving them online. Despite this, quite some Covid-related interruptions were encountered concerning high-level events, activities outside the capitals, or those involving more external stakeholders. Besides, there are understandable concerns about how the pandemic has affected political freedoms. While some signs in this direction have been reported, drawing hard conclusions from this exceeds the scope of this evaluation.

Growing investments over the years illustrate the increasing importance attached to **internal learning** under the SPDD programme. Signs of internal learning – the translation of reflections in improved practices – from M&E efforts are most obvious in relation to the MTR results. In addition, there are reported examples of learning, partly attributed to the outcome harvesting exercises. Besides, the SPDD programme undertakes different types of learning activities with varying levels of appreciation. Despite the **apparent results and prominence of learning in the SPDD programme**, the evaluation team observes a broad sense of dissatisfaction when it comes to learning in the programme, particularly directed to the way in which learning is organised and embedded in the partnership. The many adaptations in programme management illustrate learnings following *organic* rather than more *formal* reflections, which are often not explicitly captured nor recognised.

Despite the absence of a clear partnership strategy, the **quality of the partnership between NIMD and its country partners is characterised by increasing levels of trust and maturity** in cooperation. A good balance is found between control and autonomy, with adequate attention devoted to the capacity building of partners, particularly in improving complex-aware programming. No clear correlation is found between the partnership modality and results, as the maturity of the partner and the relationship appear to be more important factors for successful cooperation. The **quality of relationships with international partners is largely positive**, whereby in particular the partnership with EPD has been fruitful. The quality of cooperation with DSH – as a central partner on behalf of MoFA – has shown remarkable improvement since the MTR in 2018. Nevertheless, both sides see scope to elevate the partnership to a more strategic level. The quality of cooperation with embassies

remains mixed but improved overall, illustrated by growing cooperation in networking, funding, and seeking complementarities.

In response to these conclusions, the evaluation has formulated the following **recommendations**:

1. Retain unique vision but adapt the programme framework to facilitate planning and reporting

Consolidate your vision of “inclusive and transparent democracies through stronger political parties” as a starting point for future programmes, as it remains relevant and communicates well both NIMD’s ambition and its (unique) position in pursuit of this ambition. Besides, continue using actor-based pathways of change to facilitate planning and reporting processes, at both the international and country programme levels. This will grant programme managers freedom in choosing the most relevant political actors to target and prompt them to articulate the nature and scale of behavioural changes that they strive to achieve. Furthermore, improve expectations and risk management informed by a retrospective construction of underlying assumptions at the corporate, programme, and country levels as ways to retain the relevance and success of future programmes.

2. Institutionalise a comprehensive practice of adaptive programming

In recognition of the complexity and maturity of NIMD's programme, institutionalise adaptive programming practices to improve relevance and efficiency. This has direct implications for planning, budgeting, and reporting processes, as well as bearing consequences for future partner relations and shaping the learning function in NIMD's programmes, which translate in a set of interrelated, mutually reinforcing recommendations.

2.1 Introduce adaptive programme management systems

To facilitate the practice of adaptive programming, consider the unpredictability of circumstances as a given and adopt planning systems that allow the constant adaptation of activities. At the beginning of a programme cycle, use a sound PEA as a basis to formulate desired pathways of change for the most relevant actors to be targeted. Subsequently, specify the nature of (behavioural) changes that can realistically be pursued and the ways in which progress will be monitored in annual plans. In line with this, use budget lines that are results based and include a percentage for institutional funding. In other words, allow for more freedom in the choice of interventions and the use of resources, but also ensure that these choices are reported and accounted for, using simple formats to explain why an activity took place and what effect it had on the behaviour of targeted actors.

2.2 Construct a fitting partnership approach, including a more predictable exit strategy

Trust and encourage the growing maturity of country partners to act in an independent and accountable manner as a precondition for applying adaptive programming as a programmatic principle. Stimulate this growing maturity through a deliberate partnership evolution strategy with advancing 'levels of freedom for adaptive programming', with current practices as the starting level. Include an exit strategy in this, assuming gradually declining direct programme contributions to its “maturing” partners, with predictable shifts in support towards joint fundraising.

2.3 Optimise learning for better adaptive programming

Make sure that NIMD’s growing body of experience facilitates adaptive programming by ensuring that choices are more informed by collective knowledge, and less dependent on individual insights and preferences. Develop a learning strategy and consequent practices to shape NIMD's expanding body of knowledge with the deliberate purpose of supporting (its reality of) adaptive programming.

Incorporate a joint (annual) structured process for prioritising learning questions/challenges together with a fitting knowledge-building/-sharing approach in this strategy. Besides, ascertain the necessary management steering and deliberate facilitation of learning, ensuring that learning results are easily traceable, accessible and useful.

3. Conduct IL&A through strong partners, be pragmatic about global-to-local linkages

To be more effective in IL&A efforts, select and collaborate with a reputable alliance or partner that has a successful track record and reputation in lobbying the targeted international entity as the main intervention strategy in this direction. Subsequently, concentrate on NIMD's comparative strength of contributing country-based experiences that illustrate why and how to deal with political parties in stimulating (sub-)national democratisation processes. Furthermore, remain modest in global-to-country lobby and advocacy (L&A) efforts and focus on stimulating country partners in the use of relevant international resolutions or conventions. Finally, document SPDD's varying experiences and tactics between international- and country-level L&A and make these accessible as a guide for future IL&A programmes.

4. Strengthen programme approach towards the participation of women in politics

For the participation of women in politics to become a more central feature of NIMD activities, it is essential to develop i) specific/thematic skills development tools (including internal training cycles), supported by ii) toolkits to ensure that gender support is mainstreamed in the work of every country programme. In addition, strive for deeper and more sustained progress in women's political participation in each programme country so that it can survive politically-minded attempts to reverse this. This can be achieved by applying a stronger gender focus on every new PEA exercise, as well as making NIMD democracy schools and political party training programmes key vehicles for promoting women's participation in every programme country.

5. Act on emerging research areas

Invest research and development resources in two strategic knowledge areas that emerged during the evaluation. First, design a framework for measuring the impact of (changes in) multi-party democracy to reconfirm the continued relevance of NIMD's overall vision. Second, develop evidence-based insights into what can be done to protect or regain political freedoms that have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic to sustain the credibility/relevance of upcoming programmes.

6. Pursue a stronger strategic alliance with DSH

Act on the joint interest of DSH and NIMD to elevate their relationship to a more strategic level, starting with a deliberate articulation and recognition of complementarities as a basis for formulating mutual expectations. Subsequently, formalise this by drawing up a strategic cooperation framework illustrating when, where and how these complementarities are best used, as well as how parties will keep each other accountable for follow-up.

7. Recognise and protect yourself against the risks of leading a subsidised partnership

Carefully consider the legal and financial implications of taking lead positions in future partnerships. Based on experience, engage in dialogue with partners to agree on how to mitigate the risks of disappearing or under-performing partners, possibly including due diligence of new partners, and ensure that these are documented in a formal partnership agreement.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the final evaluation

This final evaluation takes place in the fifth and final year of the NIMD Strategic Partnership Dialogue and Dissent programme “Conducive Environments for Effective Policy Influencing - the Role of Political Parties and Parliaments” (hereafter referred to as SPDD programme) and it runs parallel to NIMD’s application process for new partnership programmes with the Dutch MoFA. Given the new subsidy framework, this means that the SPDD programme will not be extended in its current shape, although much of its work may continue within the context of new programmatic frameworks that will take definite shape in the second half of 2020.

The main purpose of the final evaluation is learning. Accordingly, this means that the learnings from this final evaluation have to be extracted and presented in a relevant and actionable way for the new programmes that NIMD and its partners are developing. More specifically, this means that this final evaluation aims to examine what has worked well and not so well, particularly in terms of:



Besides, this final evaluation also serves an accountability purpose, enabling the SPDD programme to demonstrate (1) its effectiveness in realising its intended outcomes, and (2) the extent to which resources entrusted to the programme have been used efficiently.

In addition, the evaluation looks at the sustainability of its results, both from an accountability perspective (did the SPDD programme lead to results that remain after the programme has come to a close?) and a learning perspective (what worked well and not so well in ascertaining the sustainability of progress in a multi-party democracy, and what can NIMD do to help sustain results?). Especially when assessing progress towards intended results, in undertaking this evaluation we also consider the impact of AWEPA's disappearance and the ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

1.2 Scope of the final evaluation

The evaluation covers the period from 2016 to mid-2020 and builds on the data collected for the mid-term review (MTR) in 2018. Accordingly, the focus of the additional data collection under this final evaluation is placed on assessing programme effectiveness in the last two years of the programme, devoting attention to substantiating documented outcomes rather than re-harvesting them. Accordingly, the evaluation aims to optimise the relevance of its findings for NIMD's future programmes by concentrating on assessing and learning from progress related to (i) multi-party dialogue processes, (ii) the participation of women in politics, and (iii) the capacity building of partners. It is understood that these areas reflect a refinement of the three central themes mentioned in the ToR: (1) trust-building and inclusive dialogue, (2) gender equality and inclusiveness, and (3) capacity development for L&A.

In assessing efficiency, the evaluation builds on the MTR findings that relied on financial data up to the end of 2017. To gain insights into trends over time on several key efficiency indicators, this final evaluation therefore concentrates on collecting efficiency-related information concerning 2018 and 2019.

This final evaluation also assesses the sustainability of the programme, as well as progress made in terms of the programme's learning ambitions by reviewing the extent to which MTR lessons have been applied, and the (effects of) the implementation of the programme's own learning agenda.

Although the evaluation focuses on the 2016-2020 period covered by this SPDD, we acknowledge that NIMD has had a longer working history in many of the programme countries. Therefore, we recognise that some results will find their origin and can be explained by events prior to the current programme period and where possible we will take note of that, although a systematic review of results in their historical perspective is considered beyond the scope of this evaluation.

1.3 Departures from the ToR and limitations

During the inception phase, refinements were made to the original evaluation questions of the ToR by placing accents on the following:

- Place a learning focus on three areas of progress that hold particular relevance for NIMD's future programmes: (i) multi-party dialogue processes, (ii) the participation of women in politics, and (iii) the capacity building of partners.
- Consider sustainability not only in terms of 'after SPDD support ends' but also concerning what NIMD could do to help sustain earlier-achieved results.
- Go beyond describing the perceived experience with local partners by also looking at the effect of the partnership modality (NIMD country office versus independent partner organisation) on the progress towards and sustainability of results.
- Consider changes in 'democratic space' as a potential factor in the contribution analysis of outcomes.
- Concentrate the question "what has been learned from the demise of AWEPA?" on learnings in terms of programme results rather than programme management and administration.
- Pay attention to the need and shaping of 'exit strategies' as a particular learning question.

These refinements are worked into the final evaluation matrix as presented in Annex 2.

The evaluation draws on the substantiation and contribution of fifteen outcome cases (see methodological chapter). The outcomes are substantiated by national consultants interviewing at least two relatively independent resource persons per case (i.e. neither a partner nor beneficiary of the SPPD). However, the evaluation relies on the country partners identifying and mobilising these external resource persons, which implies the risk of some bias in the selection of interviewees. We have tried to mitigate the risk of this bias by being clear about the criteria for selection, and in case of doubt by increasing the number of external interviewees to gain a broader set of inputs. Besides, due to doubts about the independence of the first interviews, an additional round of interviews was organised in Kenya, with NIMD staff assisting in the selection and mobilisation of relevant but more 'distant' resource persons.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the evaluation was implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, which severely restricted the travel of the core evaluation team members. Accordingly, all in-country data collection was delegated to national consultants under at-distance guidance, while all other data collection and analysis as well as internal coordination was done remotely. Having to fully rely on national consultants for in-country data collection involved a range of implications. Positive implications include national consultants having less formal and easier access to resource persons. National consultants' experience and subject-matter expertise helped to gather the most relevant, contextualised data for further interpretation and analysis.

At the same time, not being able to accompany national consultants in the field involved a time-consuming process of guidance for them to use the various evaluation methods including substantiation and contribution analysis in a consistent manner to generate comparable data. Working together fully virtually helped to convey the essence, but some of the details and nuances became lost, while the depth of the analysis did not fully benefit from the continuous exchange of reflections that would have occurred during joint in-country fieldwork. Nevertheless, we believe that content-wise we have arrived at the necessary information to reach a fair and comprehensive assessment of the programme.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter two describes the subject of the evaluation, covering the basic facts of the programme along with a summary of the conceptual thinking/ToC behind the programme. Chapter three describes the methodological approach and further details related to data collection and sampling. In chapter four, we present the findings of the evaluation, structured according to the various evaluation criteria. Chapters five and six contain the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation, respectively. The annexes to the report are presented in a separate document.

2 Programme description

2.1 Basic facts about the SPDD programme

The MoFA established the SPDD as an implementing vehicle for its 2013 policy “A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment”. This policy called for an integrated approach of aid, trade, and investment for global justice, promoting civil society organisations’ (CSOs) role in challenging the policy status quo and ensuring that substantial economic growth in partner countries becomes development for all.

NIMD entered into the strategic partnership with MoFA together with AWEPA for the 2016-2020 period with the “Conducive Environment for Effective Policy Influencing: the Role of Political Parties and Parliaments” programme. This five-year programme has had a budget of €32,050,195 and originally covered ten countries (Benin, Georgia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar¹, Uganda, and Zimbabwe²) and one region (Central America, covering El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), along with the IL&A. Following a scoping mission, an additional €450,000 has been mobilised – partly from the SPDD flexible fund and partly from MFA’s 1% fund – and Ethiopia has been included in the programme.

Figure 1 SPDD countries



The SPDD programme designed by NIMD and AWEPA has focused on increasing the responsiveness of political parties and parliaments to civic actors in policy processes. NIMD was originally responsible for the political party component and the parliamentary component in Asia and Central America, while AWEPA was responsible for the parliamentary component in Africa.

¹ Myanmar co-funded by Demo Finland.

² Countries in the report appear in alphabetical order unless content requires a different sequence.

To operationalise the programme, NIMD and AWEPA spent most of 2016 developing country-level ToCs based on the programme-wide ToC, as well as detailing five-year country programmes and allocating budgets. After an initial year of getting started, 2017 was expected to be the year in which the pace of implementation would accelerate. However, this was disrupted by solvency issues within AWEPA, ultimately resulting in its closure. In September 2017, NIMD was formally notified of this by AWEPA's governing council. This disruptive event demanded a substantial re-arrangement of the strategic partnership by NIMD. In addition, NIMD conducted feasibility studies in Benin, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, and Uganda to determine how to proceed with the parliamentary component of the programme. Besides, NIMD commissioned an external review of the SPDD's results and reporting framework, which resulted in identifying a more succinct list of the most commonly-used intermediate indicators.

In 2018, NIMD entered its third year of programme implementation with many of its ambitions remaining to be covered, but also with a clearer focus on its programmatic results and sharper instruments for political analysis and programme (re-)design. In 2018, NIMD also commissioned a MTR of the SPDD programme, which concluded the following:

- The programme and its overall ToC remains relevant, but the programme is somewhat overly ambitious, while there is scope to improve in the operationalisation of its conceptual logic.
- The programme's effectiveness is reasonable to good, especially in quantitative terms, albeit with large variations between countries. Through three case studies, the contribution of the programme is significant and unique, although many of the SPDD's early results are not captured by the regular reporting of results.
- Progress towards the programme's three cross-cutting goals – in particular related to the goal of gender equality – is confirmed. The other two goals (L&A and capacity development) are regarded more as intermediate steps than separate goals, with progress varying across the countries. At the same time, the international L&A is still observed to be in its early stages.
- Programmatic PME processes are a cause for concern, while clear signs of cost-consciousness in programme management are found.
- The quality of the partnership with MoFA is assessed as 'challenging', and those with embassies 'varying', while the quality of the partnership with country partners at the country level also varies, largely depending on the maturity of those partnerships.

Based on this, the MTR formulated a set of recommendations aiming to help the implementation of the SPDD programme in the remaining period until the end of 2020. These recommendations – among others – related to (1) adaptations in the programme's ToC, (2) its planning and monitoring practices, (3) consolidating some of the programme's strengths, and (4) introducing a partner strategy.

In the last two years of the programme, an actor-based planning and reporting practice has been introduced, along with continued efforts to harvest more 'outcome-level' results and gain better insights into the effects of the programme beyond its deliverables. In this final year of operation, the SPDD programme has been affected by the Covid-19 crisis, which has slowed down activities or forced the programme to redirect its efforts. Consequently, results in 2020 are likely to differ from what was planned.

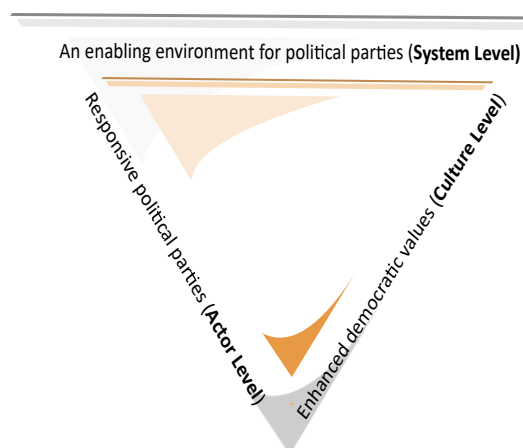
2.2 Theory of change and results framework

The programme's ToC is reflected in the programme document, which is aligned to NIMD's overall ToC as described in a separate document. Below, we provide a summary of the essence of NIMD's ToC as understood by this evaluation.

Working on dialogue across the party spectrum is NIMD's unique proposition. In the context of this programme, NIMD has adapted its value proposition to the SPDD focus on L&A and identified its niche in creating an enabling environment for CSOs and citizens to influence political actors. As such, the programme aims to empower relevant civic actors and enhance the responsiveness of political actors towards policy-influencing efforts by civil society.

NIMD's holistic programme covers building the institutional capacity of political actors in connecting with society and analysing political themes, levelling the political playing field, and shaping a more participative and cooperative political culture. To capture this, the programmatic ToC connects the overall objective of the inclusive and transparent political system with the change in three different interrelated dimensions, namely political systems, actors, and culture (as shown in Figure 2 below):

Figure 2 Simplified illustration of SP strategies



System level - an enabling environment for political actors³

Actor level - responsive and policy-based political parties⁴

Culture level - enhanced democratic values of political actors⁵

NIMD has developed three broad instruments plus a cross-cutting strategy as the building blocks for shaping country-level interventions: inter-party dialogue and cooperation

1. Capacity building on organisational development and political programming⁶
2. Democracy schools/schools of politics⁷ and training
3. Sharing knowledge⁸

³ NIMD facilitates the joint development of improvements in regulations based on a minimum of trust between parties.

⁴ NIMD supports parties in establishing new/improved consultation mechanisms to take into account CS needs and interests, parties' capacity to analyse dev. issues and formulate inclusive policies and mechanisms for domestic accountability.

⁵ NIMD focuses on four dimensions of political culture: (i) the extent to which interactions between political actors are accommodative vs. antagonistic; (ii) the extent to which political actors are interested in self-gain as opposed to the public good; (iii) the extent to which political actors trust other political actors that they do not know well; and (iv) the presence of cultural barriers and stereotypes against some groups, such as women or minorities.

⁶ NIMD aligns its support to the electoral cycle.

⁷ Hereafter, the terms democracy school and school of politics are used interchangeably.

⁸ NIMD links politicians in a region because they are much more interested in learning from fellow politicians than from scholars or project managers. This can take the form of South-South exchange visits, peer-to-peer learning, regional round

The MTR formulated the following points for attention that are relevant to the ToC, which will be considered further during this evaluation:

- (i) The SPDD programme works on the assumption that democracy makes countries more prosperous and stable irrespective of cultural or historical traits.
- (ii) The SPDD programme does not explicitly recognise the preconditions required for the above assumption to remain true.
- (iii) The SPDD programme omits elaborating on the mechanisms (so-called pathways) concerning how SP's inputs and activities generate the desired changes.
- (iv) The SPDD programme does not clearly demarcate its spheres of control, influence and concern, which complicates the distinction of results that are within its control (for which the SP can be held accountable) and those beyond its control (relevant for learning and steering).

tables on issues of relevance to country programmes, and (annual) regional conferences. Peer exchanges are increasingly also used in establishing new inter-party dialogue platforms, whereby political peers with experience in facilitating dialogue processes in their own country guide and support setting up these dialogue spaces.

3 Methodological approach

3.1 Evaluation criteria and principles

Given the dual learning and accountability purpose, the evaluation assesses the following evaluation criteria (Table 1):

Table 1 Evaluation criteria explained

Effectiveness and impact	<p>The extent to which signs of progress towards higher results levels (beyond the programme's sphere of control) can be found and explained by/attribution to the programme. This applies to both country-level and IL&A results, whereby special attention will be devoted to the programme's three central programme themes.</p> <p>Effectiveness at the output level is assessed through desk study research (including a portfolio review) and interviews with NIMD programme staff and in-country partner staff. Effectiveness in progressing towards outcomes has been assessed through 15 case studies⁹ whereby earlier documented outcomes have been substantiated and been subjected to a systematic contribution analysis.</p>
Financial efficiency	<p>The extent to which the programme has made good use of the resources put at its disposal. Financial efficiency is assessed by looking at trends in a selected number of efficiency indicators over the 2016-2019 period, in addition to seeking evidence of cost-conscious management practices.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The extent to which the programme's accomplishments are likely to continue after programme funding has come to an end, and what NIMD can do to further to support the sustainability of its results. Sustainability is assessed by looking at the extent to which apparent conditions for sustainability have been realised as well as the measures taken under the SPDD to help ascertain the sustainability of its results.</p>

Besides, the evaluation has assessed the (continued) validity of the programme's ToC and the internal learning results from SPDD programme implementation.

Further details about the methodological approach are presented in the evaluation matrix (see Annex 2) and can be found in the inception report that was approved in July 2020.

⁹ Three country cases each in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, and Myanmar, and three cases related to IL&A interventions.

3.2 Data collection, sampling and analysis

As can be seen from the evaluation matrix, the evaluation uses a variety of data collection methods including desk study research, case studies, and key informant interviews (primarily distant, individual and in groups with NIMD programme and partner staff). The desk study reviewed almost 50 SPDD planning and reporting documents and related publications. Besides, around 40 people have been interviewed in-country (primarily partner staff and external resource persons) and another 50 people (primarily NIMD and MFA staff). An overview of documents and interviewees consulted can be found in Annexes 4 and 5.

The evaluation undertakes a substantiation and contribution analysis of fifteen outcome cases, including twelve country-specific outcome cases concentrated in four countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, and Myanmar). In light of the learning objective of the evaluation, countries are selected based on their relevance for future programmes, geographic diversity, and availability of outcome data, while also considering diversity in partner modality and the prevalence of conducive democratic space.

Within each of these countries, a stratified sample of three cases is selected to ensure equal coverage of the programme's thematic areas and goals, whereby cases with an expected strong learning potential are prioritised. This results in a sample of cases of 'remarkable outcome-level change', as well as cases of 'absent change' (i.e. changes that had been expected but apparently did not occur).

Substantiation and contribution analysis of these cases relies on in-country data collection by a national consultant, whereby for each case at least two external sources are consulted. Given that cases are examined in four countries, close interaction with the relevant in-country partners took place. Besides, the evaluation examines three outcome cases related to the programme's IL&A efforts.

An overview of the selected cases can be found in Annex 3.

In addition, virtual meetings with partner organisations in non-case countries took place to gather inputs related to:

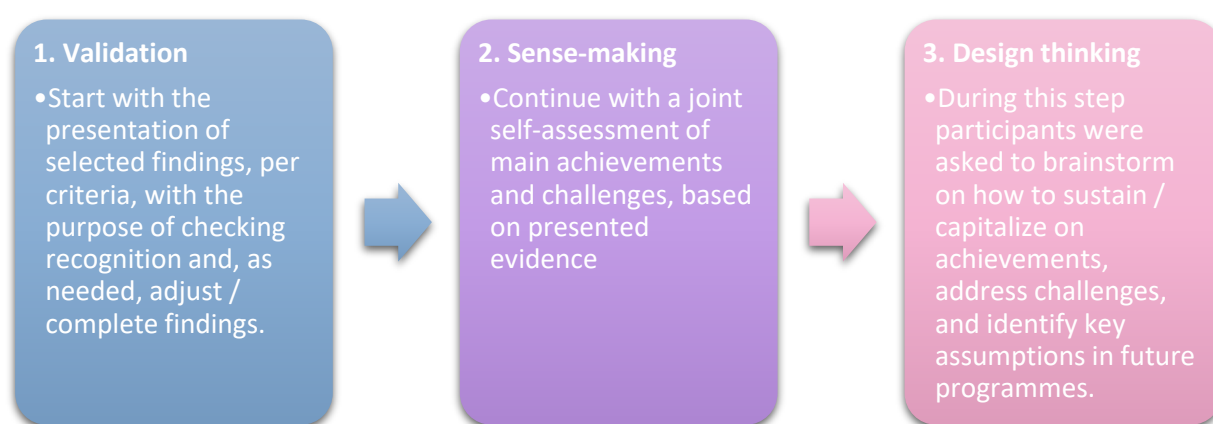
- The sustainability of achievements
- The effects of COVID-19 on programme results
- Adaptations to interventions/strategies in response to contextual changes and learnings
- Experience working with NIMD (meeting expectations, changes)

In line with the agreed methodologies as presented in the inception report, the evaluation assessed effectiveness by comparing reported achievements with plans, including a review of progress since the MTR. This assessment was informed by an underlying analysis of explanatory/contributing factors as presented in existing documentation and the substantiation and contribution analysis of the 15 outcome cases. The efficiency assessment is primarily based on an analysis of trends in budget and expenditure data, with a particular focus on key efficiency indicators related to depletion rates and the ratio between the programmatic and overhead costs. Sustainability-related conclusions are primarily based on documented references to sustainability considerations and achievements, combined with a perception study based on interviews with programme and partner staff.

Findings from in-country data collection were discussed between the national consultant and one of the core evaluation team members. The detailed results of the in-country data collection – which were shared with the country for feedback/validation – are consolidated in a separate document (annex 3). Subsequently, the overall results of the outcome cases were synthesised to arrive at a more generic overview of important internal and external contributing factors.

Following the data collection process, the evaluation team consolidated their individual analytical observations in a joint overview of findings, which were subjected to a sense-making workshop with NIMD staff on 1st October 2020. During this online event, participants were taken through a synthesis process following the three steps below (Figure 3):

Figure 3 Three steps of the sense-making event



The results of this workshop have been used to validate and complete findings, and to enrich the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

3.3 Process steps and time schedule

The process steps and time schedule as followed by the evaluation are presented in Table 2.

Important milestones included:

1. The inception meeting to discuss the evaluation process as presented in the draft evaluation report took place on 3rd July. In the subsequent week, the final evaluation report was submitted for approval (10th July), marking the start of the data collection process.
2. Desk review and key informant interviews continued until the end of September, with the in-country data collection processes scheduled from between 24th August and 18th September.
3. On 21st September, an initial debriefing session took place to share initial findings as inputs for NIMD's ongoing programme development for the new subsidy framework.
4. The global sense-making event took place on 1st October.
5. Submission of the draft and final report took place on 23rd October and 20th November, respectively, with an online meeting in between to discuss feedback on the draft report.

Table 2 Timetable of SPDD final evaluation

Task/Deliverables	Timing					
	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20
Inception						
Kick-off preparation and call						
Initial desk review						
(Online) inception meeting refining evaluation framework and workplan						
Draft inception report						
Comments by internal steering committee						
Final inception report						
Data collection						
Preparation data collection (tool development, mobilization local consultants)						
Organizing data collection (instruction of local consultants, introduction to informants, scheduling of interviews)						
Additional desk-study of programmatic documentation						
Conducting interviews with NIMD staff, MoFA and international partners						
Conducting interviews with NIMD partners/country offices in case countries by core team						
In-country data collection for substantian and contribution analysis						
Optional: survey among partners						
Analysis, sense-making, and reporting						
Debriefing initial data collection						
Processing / analysis of findings						
Global sense-making						
First draft of evaluation report						
Comments coordinated by internal steering committee						
Finalisation of report including visuals						
Preparation and holding of presentation session for NIMD staff & partners						

4 Findings

4.1 Effectiveness and contribution analysis at the country level

Main findings

- Annual plans are often partly implemented due to adaptive programming, which is often instrumental in delivering meaningful results.
- Including civil society in SPDD interventions is a positive use of adaptive programme management.
- Progress towards system-level change is suggested by the increased scope and quality of multi-party dialogue, often with a successful focus on electoral reform.
- Progress towards actor-level change largely depends on the openness and responsiveness of political actors to capacity development interventions.
- Progress towards culture-level change is shown by progress in constructive dialogue to overcome political disagreements, including improved dialogue between political actors and civil society representatives.
- Progress towards the broader participation of women in politics has been more challenging, despite significant programme efforts for this purpose in several countries.
- Programme contribution to progress towards outcomes is often clear and significant through solid technical assistance, resources, and facilitation services. It has been lacking wherever political parties have been actively or passively undermining *democratic space*.
- The concept of *democratic space* is a useful one that is insufficiently mainstreamed across SPDD country programming.

4.1.1 Effectiveness in delivering outputs

Table 3 summarises the findings and observations from the desk review for each country for the second half of the programme (2019-2020).

Table 3 Observations on delivering planned interventions 2019-2020

Observations on planned vs. actual interventions during 2019-2020	
Benin	Planning focused on parties and parliamentarians – training and dialogue. Due to a sharp reduction of <i>democratic space</i> and a highly polarising electoral context, multiple activities were suspended/aborted. Although there was a plan to support a national dialogue initiative, it was abandoned as it was not deemed a valid opportunity to trigger change. The main actual outputs were the capacity building of MPs on roles and missions and the use of ICT to interact with citizens. Other outputs were the "Votefifa" campaign carried out by the majority of the school of politics alumni, and the promotion of women's role in politics through the school of politics and internal party schools.
El Salvador	In Central America, like in Mali, NIMD makes strong use of adaptive programming in line with the countries' unstable political landscape. Planning is spread over a broad variety of interventions but was deeply affected by the political upheaval brought by Nayib Bukele's surprise victory, which ended the bi-partisan system. Upon request by the two defeated parties, NIMD designed bespoke training programmes. NIMD also adapted its democracy school's curricula and doubled the number of admissions to include civil society alumni.

	Other significant outputs were work with the electoral management body (EMB) on a more inclusive political system, and a new type of thematic dialogue on sexual and reproductive rights with young men/women of all parties.
Ethiopia	The programme has only partially followed its plan, which comprises specifically-defined interventions agreed with the key political actors. Instead, due to changes in the programme environment, it has adjusted to opportunities and needs/requests from these political actors. Most of the interventions have been adjusted and one has been added, namely studies supporting a newly-identified "entry point", the Democratic Institutions Working Group. This approach led to the programme's significant outcome described as a contribution case in the next section of the report.
Ghana	No planning and reporting documents are available after 2017. The programme in that country was terminated in mid-2018, and the remaining funds for that year were allocated to producing a video summarising the programme's achievements in Ghana until then.
Guatemala	Planning spread over a broad variety of interventions around four main actors. Not all interventions were carried out, while unplanned activities were designed to match the opportunity of establishing NIMD as a trusted specialist of electoral law reform and a strong platform for dialogue on the electoral/political inclusion of marginalised groups. The main actual outputs were NIMD's work on electoral law reform, its work with a new political party, and work with Women MP's Forum.
Honduras	Planning is spread over a very broad variety of interventions built around five broad themes. There is a strong focus on civil society with "small bets" on local actors through adaptive programming. The political crisis caused planned interventions to be suspended/cancelled, such as the thematic dialogue between supranational, national and local politicians, spaces for interaction between MPs and CSOs, training processes and follow-up dialogue guidelines. The main actual outputs were dialogue on electoral reform and the strengthening of political parties, especially on issues of women, youth and under-represented groups.
Indonesia	The programme has largely followed its planning, which comprised more broadly-defined interventions, e.g. facilitating dialogue and dissent process between civil society and identified MPs. Several interventions were implemented that were not originally in the plan, under the outcome of civic actors voicing their concerns and constructively engaging with political parties.
Kenya	The Centre for Multiparty Democracy Kenya (CMD-K) has implemented its interventions mostly as planned, except for PEA and the CMD-K donors' round table, which was postponed to 2020. New activities were organised to address polarising narratives about BBI recommendations. CMD-K's main achievement was the election of a stronger board with high-calibre women members as reported in the contribution case (see text box 5 in the section on women's participation in politics). The start of programme implementation by Mzalendo was delayed by the change of Executive Director. However, most targets have been achieved. Planning covered #MzalendoChats YouTube interviews, research on women's inclusion, a media retreat, and support to CSOs for engagement with parliament.
Mali	NIMD tested a pilot approach in which 'adaptive programming' is key. It enabled the team to depart from programmed activities to take up new entry points provided by the volatile political context. Based on its political economy analysis and using outcome harvesting

	results, NIMD focused on two actors relevant to the revision of the constitution and electoral law, namely civil society and (members of) parliament. ToC/actor pathways were completely reformulated for this purpose. In addition, the City Deal programme did not take place due to a lack of financial support from MoFA.
Mozambique	Broadly-defined programme interventions have been implemented largely according to the plan. Few planned interventions such as (1) round table expert meetings for parliamentary committees involved in electoral law reform and (2) facilitating a policy platform for political and civil actors have been combined by supporting the 1 st and 4 th Committees of the Assembly of the Republic to hold public meetings in the eleven capital cities on reform of electoral legislation.
Myanmar	The interventions are specific and few, comprising MySoP continuing to facilitate the Multiparty Dialogue Platform in Shan State, organising two core courses and one alumni activity.
Uganda	Most planned interventions focused on political party training/support through the IPOD, and they were largely implemented. However, thanks to adaptive programming, the team used a favourable context to set up and support high-level party dialogue to work on the Public Order Management Act (POMA), although it is not referenced in OH. Dialogue took place at the highest level of all NIMD countries, and the IPOD Council with ten meetings held in the second half of the year. In addition to these interventions, OH reveals gender/youth results that are not listed in actor-based pathways planning.
Zimbabwe	Due to political stalemate in Zimbabwean politics, many interventions had to be put on hold. However, some were adjusted and more than half were implemented, most of them in the area of supporting parliamentary committees and women's caucus as well as capacity strengthening and training for ZI itself.

We observed different approaches to planning followed by adaptive programming. Evaluation findings show that some country programmes follow detailed and specific planning related to the need to have agreement on SP support to their counterparts, while others define the interventions more broadly, leaving room for specification during the year. Using “adaptive programming”, SPDD country programmes have been adjusted to rapidly-changing political circumstances. In donor-heavy contexts with several international organisations present – e.g. during sensitive electoral cycles – SPDD country teams have been the smaller, nimbler and more flexible player, being able to quickly craft a new dialogue platform or working group.

This was particularly the case in the three Central American countries and Mali. This also happened – albeit to a lesser extent – in Kenya and Benin. In Honduras, the 2017 general elections were marred by multiple reports of irregularities, spurring dialogue and mediation efforts by the United Nations and the Organisation of American States. However, NIMD crafted the concept for and helped to set up a “Clean Politics Unit” (*Unidad Política Limpia*), which now sits alongside the EMB to reinforce transparency in political campaign and elections finance. Similarly, in Mali, NIMD was able to quickly revise its activities and step in to create a follow-up committee on electoral reform in 2019, which maintained thematic dialogue, while the much broader national inclusive dialogue was stalled by political disagreements.

Similarly, other SPDD country programmes also showed signs of adaptive programming, i.e. adjusting their plans to changing circumstances and emerging needs. These adjustments are mostly justified based upon the realisation that the political situation no longer leaves room for political parties to act effectively towards system and culture change (Kenya, Benin), or a political upheaval that calls for a prompt readjustment of intervention priorities (Mali, El Salvador).

The more effective interventions are those adapted/specified to fit political momentum. Furthermore, the interventions adjusted to meet an emerging opportunity or demand lead to considerable success in achieving the programme outcomes, such as in Ethiopia, Mali, and Mozambique. In case of more broadly-defined interventions like the activities of democracy schools/civic education or facilitating the established political dialogue sessions, it is easier to cater for such needs as they allow for manoeuvring towards evolving needs (El Salvador). Meanwhile, supporting potential political dialogue or restarting a political process in a state of stalemate like in Zimbabwe presents a clear limitation to adaptive management, particularly concerning annual planning.

We see examples of broadening the scope of dialogue by bringing in civil society. This is particularly the case in Central America, as well as Mali and Kenya, while it has been attempted in Uganda with less success. A stronger focus has been placed on civil society by either including it in school of politics cohorts (El Salvador) or through small bets on partnerships with local civil society actors (Mali, Kenya). Engaging CSOs in national dialogue alongside political parties has proven overly ambitious to date, due to political parties' mistrust of these new partners (Uganda). These efforts also suggest that country teams have taken stock of the shrinking *civic space* phenomenon, and now extend the reach of their interventions to a broader variety of democracy stakeholders on the ground. They are also indicative of situations in which political parties fail to play their role of structuring and driving policy debate and creating cohesive sets of policies across topics of general interest.

Finally, we observe that **separating outputs in planning and reporting according to system, actor and culture (S-A-C) is sub-optimal.** Many interventions reportedly result in improving several aspects of these components. In this regard, the actor-based pathway tool that has been used across SPDD countries since the MTR is considered very useful by nearly all respondents. This might reflect evidence that actor-centred planning and reporting is more tangible and concrete in comparison with a more conceptual S-A-C model.

4.1.2 Progress towards outcomes at the country level

The SPDD programme pursues outcomes in terms of S-A-C change. Moreover, three key results areas of the programme's work were highlighted as important for future programming: (1) realising multi-party dialogues, (2) capacity development of NIMD's partners, and (3) the participation of women in politics. Based on the presentation of NIMD's ToC – which outlines strategies and instruments relevant for S-A-C-level change (Table 4), we have categorised evaluation findings related to outcome-level change as follows:

- Progress towards system-level outcomes such as trust-building among political parties including through multi-party dialogue mechanisms;
- Progress towards actor-level outcomes such as changes in the capacity of partners/political actors;

- Progress towards culture-level outcomes such as changes in political actors having an inclusive dialogue with civil society/their constituency; and
- Progress towards women’s participation in politics.

Table 4 Overview of NIMD strategies and instruments

	System-level change	Actor-level change	Culture-level change
Objective	An enabling environment for political parties	Responsive and policy-based political parties	Enhanced democratic values of political actors
Strategy	Facilitating inter-party dialogue and cooperation	Capacity building for organisational dev. and political programming	Fostering democratic capital and behaviour
Instrument	Setting up and managing inter-party dialogue platforms	Strategic planning tool	Democracy education

Progress towards outcomes is assessed based on a desk review and the substantiation of twelve outcome cases (two of which relate to ‘missing’ outcomes), relying on at least two independent sources per case. All positive outcome cases were substantiated, while one of the two ‘missing’ outcomes was partly disputed.¹⁰ The findings of the outcome cases provided an important input for assessing progress towards outcomes, and various references to those cases can be found below. A detailed overview of all substantiated cases is presented in Annex 3.

Progress towards system-level change

We observe clear progress in terms of the scope and quality of multi-party political dialogue. Improved dialogue processes among political actors have successfully been supported by SPDD country programmes where the post-election climate allowed for an SPDD programme approach of multi-party discussions (i) at the national level such as in Ethiopia, Uganda, Honduras, and (ii) at the sub-national level in Myanmar and Honduras.

In Ethiopia, not only has a more inclusive inter-party dialogue taken place, but the rules of engagement and code of conduct have been approved and new institutions such as the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council (EPPJC) have been established to regulate relations between the parties, as well as ensuring a peaceful resolution of inter-party disputes (see text box 1).

Text box 1 Contribution case 1: Fully-substantiated, strong contribution

Outcome: *Two congresses of national consensus dialogue between political parties have been carried out in August and September 2020. This process has been restarted after the Covid-19-related pause, by request of the Prime Minister to the Chair of the Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council (EPPJC).*

Contribution claim: *The basis of the SPDD programme’s contribution here has been laid in NIMD’s work since 2017, whereby by December 2017 NIMD’s trust-building paved the way for the NIMD to be invited for an evaluation of the dialogue process between EPRDF and political parties. By the time when the Prime Minister convened representatives of PPs to resume the dialogue platform on the theme of national consensus in July 2020, NIMD had gained a solid reputation as an impartial supportive partner with relevant expertise. Thus, NIMD was asked and has provided support to the re-start of the dialogue on different fronts. NIMD*

¹⁰For instance, the Building Bridges Initiative in Kenya allegedly not leading to political parties promoting democracy, which was claimed to be missing only in part of the political parties involved.

interlocutors have been working with each and every stakeholder - the Chair of the EPPJC, PP leaders, and contacts inside the Prime Minister's office - for the PPs' dialogue to resume and when PPs protested against the signature requirements of the new electoral law, to constructively resolve the grievances. Further, NIMD's technical team provided support on establishing and organising the dialogue platform and the congresses on national consensus, as well as commissioning seven research papers presented in the two congresses on national consensus held on 22nd August and 5th September 2020. Based on this description, we assess NIMD's contribution to continuous multi-party dialogue and specifically two congresses of national consensus dialogue between political parties as strong.

In Honduras, NIMD used adaptive programming to feed and support a continuing dialogue process on electoral reform and strengthening political parties, especially on issues of women, youth and under-represented groups and people in situations of vulnerability. **In Myanmar**, enabling a multi-party political dialogue at the sub-national (Shan State) level has even led to elaborating and lobbying for a State Law of Food Safety in Basic Education School bill by all members of Multiparty Dialogue Platform. The law was passed in early 2020 and steps were taken to implement it in September 2020 (see text box 2).

Text box 2 Contribution case 10: Fully-substantiated, strong contribution

Outcome: *On 11th June 2019, during the fifteenth session of the Shan State parliament in Taunggyi, Shan State, the twelve MPs members of the Multiparty Dialogue Platform (MDP) together signed the Shan State Law of Food Safety in Basic Education School bill and submitted it to the Shan State parliament, which passed the law on 28th February 2020, and on 3rd-4th September 2020 motion was raised to develop procedure law (bylaw).*

Contribution claim: *Contribution to this change is grounded in MySoP's work with enrolees and alumni, among which are MDP participants. A pillar supporting specific MySoP's contributions to this outcome is MySoP's strategic approach to MDP composition, having a compact dedicated group comprising an equal (two from each) number of members from each political party that won the previous election, totalling 24 members from twelve parties. This "constant" membership of the platform with a supportive environment nurtured by MySoP staff has gradually resulted in a truly collaborative effort described in this outcome. Among MySoP's specific contributions creating this supportive environment are facilitation and communication with MDP members in a way that helped them to feel comfortable and remain friendly in a multi-party environment. Moreover, MySoP's needs-driven, flexible programming (including budget) has allowed for the up-keep of the emerging process of drafting a law that no one demanded. Among the external factors to the programme that made passing this law in collaborative spirit possible, a key one mentioned is the motivation of MDP members, stemming from a strong commitment to the platform and thus providing space for dialogue with other parties. Based on this motivation, and taking advantage of flexible programming, MDP members have decided to pursue drafting a law on a topic beyond individual party interests and asked for technical assistance from MySoP. As they had no previous knowledge on content (food safety) or process (drafting a law), MySoP has assisted them by commissioning required expertise, reading documents, and organising a visit to learn about food safety management in Indonesia. These contributions from MySoP have been appreciated and assessed as key in drafting the law. Further to drafting, MDP members have lobbied party leaders and the speaker of the parliament, resulting in both sides welcoming this law, which has subsequently been passed by parliament. Based on this description, we assess MySoP's contribution to collaboration among MDP participants resulting in the drafting and adoption of the law as strong.*

Where post-election violence and/or stalemate in the political climate have caused conditions to be inconducive to this type of intervention – like in the cases of Kenya and Zimbabwe – existing dialogue processes were interrupted or paused. By contrast, in other SPDD countries, the political dialogue could (re-)start despite continued restrictions to the democratic space, as was the case in Benin, where inter-party dialogue was initiated by the head of state in October 2019. In Uganda, the Inter-Party

Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) – a platform supported by NIMD – gained increased credibility and access to the highest levels to become the key dialogue platform in the country. Two summits of Ugandan party leaders took place in December 2018 and May 2019, including the current head of state, president Museveni. This brought the dialogue to the highest level of all NIMD countries. In addition, ten party secretariat-level dialogue events were organised during the second half of 2019, which is another sign of the level of trust bestowed upon IPOD by Ugandan political parties. Among other topics, dialogue focused on restrictive new legislation regarding election campaigning, namely the Public Order Management Act (POMA).

The cases of Benin and Uganda hold interest in the context of NIMD's research on shrinking *democratic space*, which has aimed to broaden and deepen the understanding of the *civic space* to adjust it to the perspective of political party assistance providers. Despite rarely being referenced in SPDD countries' planning and reporting documents, research on *democratic space* has been a central feature of SPDD's IL&A efforts since 2017. As explained by lead researcher Augustine Magolowondo, **democratic space cannot be conflated with civic space**, as the latter is chiefly defined by the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly that provide space for civil society to freely exist and perform their functions. *Civic space* is therefore not adequate to cover political parties, which have functions that lie at the core of democratic systems and extend beyond those of CSOs. In Benin and Uganda, broad restrictions have affected political parties' ability to exist officially (Benin) or stage political campaign events (Uganda). However, SPDD's audacious dialogue initiatives in these hostile environments have shown that even there **political parties remain the key fundamental unit with which to (re-)build a democracy**.

Furthermore, there is strong evidence of **multi-party dialogue and lobbying for reforms** (Honduras, Guatemala, Uganda), **resulting in improved electoral systems**. The main areas of electoral reforms are focused on women (gender quotas) and minorities (Benin, Kenya, Honduras, Guatemala). Apart from electoral legislation being updated, the SPDD programme has shown **good practices of stimulating a more participatory process towards electoral reform**. In Mozambique, the SPDD country partner – IMD – has supported holding public meetings between political parties, government institutions, civil society, electoral management and administration bodies in the eleven capital cities (all administrative units of the country), followed by a review and adoption of most of the suggestions from the municipalities by the parliament.

In many cases, **electoral reform has been supported by strengthening an electoral management body (EMB)**, such as in Ethiopia, El Salvador, and Honduras. In Ethiopia, continuous support by NIMD Ethiopia of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) since 2018 has contributed to its reform from not being trusted as a neutral body to – among others – leading the consultations and successful revision of several restrictive laws, including the Non-Governmental Organization and Charities Law, NEBE law and the Ethiopian Electoral, Political party registration and Electoral Code of Conduct Law (see text box 3).

A missing parliamentary component (post-AWEPA) has often been compensated. Several system-level results have been achieved through parliament, through either thematic committees (Honduras) or engagement with parties represented in parliament, even if mono-coloured (Uganda, Benin, Mozambique).

Progress towards actor-level change

The SPDD programme has been resourceful in finding strategies to stimulate changes at the actor level and finding different entry points to enhance political actors' responsiveness and openness to dialogue. We have grouped these strategies below as follows:

Text box 3 Contribution case 3: Fully-substantiated, strong contribution

Outcome: *After a thorough discussion, in August 2019 parliament approved the revised Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics Law.*

Contribution claim: *NIMD's contributions to the revision and approval of the revised Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics law are manifold. The political opportunity for this change to take place has been rooted in the political reform opened up by the Prime Minister Abiy as well as renewed NEBE board embarking on regaining the trust of PPs and fully engaging in the revision of laws. At the same time, the Democratic Institutions Working Group (DIWG) set by AG under the Legal and Justice Affairs Advisory Council in August 2018 and comprising voluntary scholars mainly from Addis Ababa University has been working on the revision of restrictive laws relating to human rights and democratisation. Seeing these parallel efforts and being well-positioned to do so, NIMD has worked towards linking these efforts and bringing together AG, NEBE, DIWG, and PPs. NIMD has also commissioned four studies on (1) electoral administration model, (2) election formula, (3) political party regulation, and (4) dispute settlement, and supported drafting of the law as well as the presentation of research findings to the council. With other contributions such as pressure from media, civil society actors and activists who have repeatedly called for immediate drafting and approval of a revised law to regulate the new widened political space and work of DIWG, the revised Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration and Election Ethics Law was approved by parliament in August 2019. Based on this description, we assess NIMD's contribution to approving the revised law as strong.*

The first strategy to mention is democratisation/capacity development of individual political parties to improve party performance. Here, we observe **party-level results in terms of improving internal systems**. The more visible results include the inclusion of young politicians in Benin and women's access to primaries in Kenya. In Benin, most – if not all – political parties have started to implement internal rules to ensure generational renewal within parties, with a two-term limit for MPs. In other countries, there are more signs of political parties working on improving their internal systems. In Mozambique and Georgia, following initial training in drafting manifestos and strategic planning, political parties started to request additional technical support from SPDD country partners IMD and EECMD. Moreover, several key political parties in both countries have been sharing their manifestos/programmes for evaluation/appreciation of IMD and EECMD. In El Salvador, work has been carried out on a new type of thematic dialogue on sexual and reproductive rights with young men/women of all parties.

The second strategy is multi-party support – mostly through MPs – on specific issues such as women representation in parliament. This strategy has led to **advancing women's involvement in politics** in Benin, Georgia, Mali, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. SPDD country partners have mostly been focusing on women's caucuses as well as raising the awareness of political parties to include more women in their nomination lists. Best practices of this strategy involve bringing in subject-matter expertise/research and including women's rights/relevant CS groups (see examples in the section below on progress towards women's participation in politics).

The third strategy is about giving technical advice, training, exchange/peer-to-peer learning, and/or research to support EMB (Ethiopia, Mozambique) and parliament (Ethiopia, Honduras, Mozambique, Zimbabwe). Here, again there are **tangible results in terms of improving the skills, knowledge, and plans of these political actors**. In Ethiopia, the staff of the legislative branch of Ethiopia's Oromiya State – CAFFEE – have been supported in gaining skills in conflict management and resolution, planning and policy cycle, planning and budget, and legislative drafting skills as well as insights into intergovernmental relations between the federal government and regional states and roles of the regional state councils in terms of oversight and outreach. In Mozambique, the first and fourth commissions of the Assembly of the Republic have been carrying out various activities of the electoral reform, including public hearings to collect opinions from various actors in civil society and politicians. In Zimbabwe, the oversight committees and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) as well as the women's caucus resulted in the development of strategic and action plans.

A fourth strategy is to work with political actors through democracy schools. The achievements with this strategy include **improvements of inclusive dialogue** between parties and CS representatives in Benin, Georgia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Myanmar, which are elaborated on in the section on progress towards culture-level change.

In conclusion, when looking at SPDD programme support in terms of the centrality of capacity development and trust-building, we can summarise the emerging patterns into three broad approaches (Figure 4).

Progress towards culture-level change

At this level, the changes are mostly intangible although significant in terms of actors viewing/practising dialogue as a constructive and respectful alternative to polarisation/fragmentation when addressing political disagreements. This shift from confrontation to dialogue can be seen in the behaviour of political parties engaged in multi-party dialogues in Guatemala, Honduras, Mozambique, Myanmar, Uganda, and to a lesser degree in Benin, Kenya, and Mali. Facilitation of this change has been made possible by SPDD country partners gaining trust and reputation as impartial supporters of multi-party democracy and establishing themselves as trusted experts in facilitating political dialogue (El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mozambique, Myanmar, Uganda). This has been accelerated wherever SPDD country partners could demonstrate thematic know-how on a topic of particular importance to each country. In Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mali, and Myanmar, it was through dialogue for electoral reform, while in Benin and Kenya it was through dialogue for women's representation in politics.

Figure 4 Approaches to capacity development and trust-building

Traditional approach => PP/ EMB focused	Mixed approach => strong CS and PP nexus, often topic-based	Full reset => CS-centred
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When political actors are receptive and support is needs-based. Examples: Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Uganda. Helps staying connected, still achieving good party-centered results, strong Democracy School and party dialogue nexus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When trust between political parties and civil society allows for it. Examples: Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When political parties are seen as problem instead of a solution. Examples: Mali and Kenya

Another shift observed at the culture level is in terms of **improved dialogue between political actors and civil society representatives, including at the sub-national level**. In four provinces of Georgia where democracy schools have been functioning for several years, representatives of government and political parties both account to democracy school enrolees and alumni on their actions vis-à-vis plans, as well as asking them for advice on new initiatives/platforms. In Indonesia, multiple constructive discussions on inclusivity (in the framework of reporting on SDG 16) have been held between civil society groups and MPs, legislative candidates, parties and parliamentary faction experts. In Benin, the school of democracy has proactively engaged with civil society young activists, in particular with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's young leaders' programme.

Civic education is key to achieving improved dialogue between political actors and civil society representatives, through schools of politics (Benin, El Salvador, Georgia, Myanmar, Mozambique) as well as capacity development of CSOs (Indonesia). Based on studying programme successes in this regard, making civic education a powerful contributor to changing collective attitude seems to require working on a smaller scale or with a smaller group of dedicated enrolees (e.g. at a sub-national level like in the cases of Myanmar and Georgia) and for a longer period to benefit from the scale in terms of alumni numbers (Benin). Moreover, established schools of politics bring along the recognition of the significance of political education, like in the example of Benin, where the government made it compulsory for parties to enrol in a school of politics as part and parcel of the wide-ranging political party reform heralded by president Talon. While setting up their own “schools of politics”, political parties have thus spontaneously established training partnerships with NIMD’s democracy school.

Similarly, a significant contributor to improved dialogue is the strategy of bringing civil society representatives into political dialogue, which has proven especially helpful in unlocking stalled political processes or broadening the debate on specific topics. SPDD has demonstrated several ways in which this could work, including the following:

- CSOs testing new research-based tools or approaches to increase participation and dialogue between citizens and politicians such as digital platforms for exchanges with members of parliament, or campaigns carried out by popular artists to vulgarise the findings of a study on topics such as the ‘cost of politics’ (Georgia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Indonesia; see text box 4).
- Holding forums for dialogue between electoral and political actors with the main objective of raising awareness of reducing electoral conflict and promoting dialogue prior to, during and after the sixth general and third provincial elections (Mozambique).

- Organising workshops on topical issues within the framework of state obligation to report on SDG 16, as in the case of Indonesia, or the law on access to information, as happened in Benin.

Text box 4 Contribution case 8: Fully-substantiated, strong contribution

Outcome: The national inclusive dialogue organised by the government in the last trimester of 2019 decided that the moralisation of politics was a priority.

Contribution claim: NIMD is credited with making a decisive contribution in raising awareness among nearly all actors in Malian political life – including voters – about the need to moralise political life in the country. This result was achieved thanks to the preliminary research work conducted by NIMD on the cost of politics in Mali. NIMD's report showed hard evidence to all involved concerning the financial expenses needed to win elections in the country. The figures presented in NIMD's report were staggering and acted as a very strong wake-up call to broad sectors of Malian society. Well-known artists were convinced of the need to convey the key messages that advocate the moralisation of political life in the country, which produced a very strong effect among all classes of Malian society.

Finally, there are occasions when previously significant parties suffer devastating electoral defeats (El Salvador), are side-lined by a political process that tends to render them less relevant (Benin, Kenya), or are faced by the threat of impending political irrelevance caused by a strong popular movement/party (Uganda). These exceptional circumstances can be used as windows of opportunity for cultural change, as parties are subsequently more likely to engage with civil society and listen to the needs of citizens (Benin, El Salvador, Kenya). On the other side of the coin, the parties that benefit from those evolutions and dominate the field demonstrate less openness (Uganda, Mali, Kenya, Indonesia), in which case a different approach is needed to stimulate changes at the culture level.

Progress towards women's participation in politics

We observe that making progress in this area has been more challenging, although this is not for the lack of trying, as SPDD partners have been working on the political participation of women at all three S-A-C levels. Moreover, the nature and scale of reported results on gender equality are rather varied per country. In some countries – seemingly those with country partners that have longer-term commitment and mandate to foster gender equality in politics – it appears to be a 'core issue', while in others it tends to be treated as a 'side issue'. Apart from long-term commitment, respondents mention a need for specific/thematic skills development, tools and more guidance (e.g. the need for systematic inclusion in PEAs/toolkits for gender support) to mainstream gender in their work. They also emphasise the necessity for a more thorough understanding of context-specific barriers to women's political participation (e.g. cost of politics) as well as entry points for interventions to overcome these barriers.

To add further depth to our review of system-level changes for women's political participation, we have explored the status of gender electoral quota as an important and acknowledged indicator for measuring progress towards a gender balance in political institutions. According to International IDEA, the introduction of quota systems for women represents a qualitative jump into a policy of exact goals and means, and using this system might prompt a dramatic increase in women's representation.¹¹ As can be seen from table 5 below, seven out of fourteen programme countries have system-level

¹¹ <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas>

changes favourable to women's political participation in terms of quotas, albeit not of recent (within 5 years of programme work) origin, and interestingly in neither of the two programme countries that have the highest representation of women in parliaments. In Mozambique as well as Ethiopia, the high level of women's representation is reportedly attributable to the adoption of a voluntary quota of 30% for women's representation in elections by the ruling parties (Mozambique Liberation Front and Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), as well as additional stimuli like NEBE's financial incentive for parties to field women candidates.¹²

Table 5 Data on women representation in the legislature, ordered by the highest percentage in lower/single house¹³

Country	Lower/single house		Upper house/senate		Gender electoral quota
	Elections	%W (trend last elections)	Elections	% W	
Mozambique	15.10.2019	41.0 (↑0.4%)	-	-	A quota system is not legislated
Ethiopia	24.05.2015	38.8	05.10.2015	32.0	A quota system is not legislated
Uganda	18.02.2016	34.9	-	-	Reserved seats, legislated quotas, since 1989
El Salvador	04.03.2018	33.0	-	-	The legislated quota of 30% of women candidates since 2013
Zimbabwe	30.07.2018	31.9	30.07.2018	43.8	Reserved seats, legislated quotas since 2013
Mali	29.03.2020	27.9 (↑19%)	-	-	Legislated candidate quota of no more than 70% of either gender on an electoral list since 2015
Kenya	08.07.2017	21.8	08.07.2017	30.9	Reserved seats, legislated quotas since 2010
Honduras	26.11.2017	21.1	-	-	The legislated quota of at least 40% of women candidates since 2012
Indonesia	17.04.2019	20.4 (↑2.2%)	-	-	Legislated candidate quotas (>30%) of women candidates since 2013
Guatemala	16.06.2019	19.4 (↑0.4%)	-	-	Voluntary party quotas, 30/40% for parties in the current parliament
Georgia	08.10.2016	14.8	-	-	Stimuli to a political party that has at least 30% of

¹² 2020. *Women In Parliament In 2015*. [online] Available at: <https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/wip2015-e.pdf>

¹³ Sources: <https://data.ipu.org/content/list-fields> and <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/database>

					female members to receive a 30% bonus
Ghana	07.12.2016	13.1	-	-	No quota for women
Myanmar	08.11.2015	11.3	08.11.2015	12.1	No quota for women
Benin	28.04.2019	6.0 (↑1.2%)	-	-	No gender quota ¹⁴

Reports from the country programmes working more on advancing women's political participation well as NIMD's own research¹⁵ show that **changes at the system level** require a longer (than 5 years') commitment and are very sensitive to the political climate. In Honduras, the progressive adoption of a full parity quota of 50% was the result of years of struggle by feminist groups duly backed by international donors, although despite this success the political establishment has found ways to ignore the new quota system. Consequently, the most recent general election in 2017 brought the lowest number of female MPs to national congress.¹⁶ In Zimbabwe, before parties came to a political deadlock they had agreed that increasing women's participation would be one of the ten priority areas. They had also chosen to use party registration as an instrument for incentivising the parties to increase women's participation and had shown interest in adopting the Women's Political Rights Programme (a result of peer learning from Kenya).

Nevertheless, SPDD country partners lobby for increased women participation in politics. In Georgia, from five attempts since 2002 to introduce diverse mandatory quotas, the SPDD's supported initiative of June 2017 resulted in 37,000 citizens' signatures in support of 50% mandatory gender quotas for parties' proportional lists for parliamentarian and local elections. Although Georgia's parliament rejected a bill on 23rd March 2018, a follow-up lobbying action resulted in the adoption of the new law on 29th June 2020, defining that all parties contending for parliament must award every fourth party-list seat that they win to a person "of a different gender." In practical terms, it is expected that this autumn's election will see 30 seats from 120 seats chosen on a proportional basis allocated to women candidates. In Honduras, in 2020 NIMD helped to achieve the introduction of a proposal to improve women's electoral conditions through the Equity Commission of Gender of the National Congress. In Benin, NIMD's inter-party dialogue in 2017 generated a discussion about possible quotas for women. NIMD organised an experience-sharing visit to Kenya, which was crucial in gathering information. This directly contributed to the constitutional revision of 2019, which – after two unsuccessful votes – finally enshrined positive discrimination for women. This principle was then introduced in the new electoral law through a – disappointing yet nonetheless improved – quota of 22% of parliamentary seats reserved for women candidates. In Indonesia, in 2019 lobbying political parties provided opportunities for women to actively participate in electoral politics, especially by complying with the electoral regulation of fielding 30% of women candidates.

The most significant **changes at the actor level** in terms of political participation of women include an example from Kenya, where – with support from CMD-K – all parties constituting its membership

¹⁴ In 2011, the parliament of Benin attempted to pass a gender quota of 20% women, although the legislation was later nullified by the constitutional court.

¹⁵ Rodríguez Prieto, S. and Bloching, S., n.d. *NIMD'S Work on Gender and Access to Power*. NIMD.

¹⁶ Nevertheless, despite the reduced number of women in parliament resulting from the last elections, it must be said that the number of substitute MPs increased from 49 to 128, the number of vice-mayors went up from 49 to 128 and councillors from 515 to 628.

reduced their nomination fees for female candidates by 50% to 100% in 2017. Here, presenting solid evidence to party leaders for them to realise that they needed to act – at least within their parties – proved decisive in swaying them into action. In Benin, several political parties have recently set a two-term limit to their members of parliament, which is directly geared towards enabling young party members – in particular women – to become candidates. However, the material impact of these rules remains strongly hindered by the central importance of money in Beninese politics. Among changes to internal regulations within parties are examples from Central America. In all three countries, NIMD works with forums of women MPs and forums of women of political parties, providing strong opportunities to support policy influencing for a stronger role of women in politics. In Honduras, NIMD has been training parties in the internal promotion of women and youth rights. NIMD supported the inclusion processes promoted by the Secretaries/Directions of Women of Honduran political parties, which resulted in five parties enacting internal policies of inclusion and participation of women. More broadly, NIMD's support to women politicians also exists at the regional level through its strong interaction with the Forum of Political Women of the Central American Parliament.

Text box 5 Contribution case 5: Fully-substantiated, strong contribution

Outcome: *During the 1st July 2019 elections of the CMD-K Steering Committee, political parties nominated and elected more high-calibre women to the leadership of the CMD-K Steering Committee.*

Contribution case: *The election of the high-calibre women into the CMD-K Steering Committee is an outcome of historic significance for the participation of women in Kenyan politics. It speaks to the very substantial contribution of CMD-K's internal capacity, funding base, and programmatic coherence backed by a strong pro-women senior leadership. CMD-K has a strong gender agenda in its strategic documents and its programmatic activities support women's inclusion. NIMD's support is credited for helping to build a solid institution with structures and a qualified staff base. Simultaneously, external factors such as the prevailing political climate occasioned by the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), a quest for national unity and reforms within the executive, the ongoing push for the enactment of the legal regime in support of the two-thirds gender rule/principle also informed the participation of women and their eventual elections into the CMD-K Steering Committee.*

At the culture level and in civic education, SPDD could achieve more in terms of the participation of enrolled women. Female representation in the democracy school in Georgia has generally been higher than 50%, often ranging between 60% and 75%. In Indonesia, 67% of the total registered participants in civic engagement activities in 2019 were women. In El Salvador, the local democracy school run by NIMD El Salvador has established a non-negotiable 50% gender quota, and reportedly parties abide by this requirement, partly due to the high level of cross-party organisation of women politicians. In Honduras, NIMD's Women Candidates Academy – which has been open since 2013 in cooperation with NDI, UN Women, UNDP and INAM – has rolled out its programmes in six regions of the country and has had a strong empowering effect on female politicians from rural areas, who often feel that they are not worthy of running for office. In Mozambique, IMD runs Women's Political Academy classes in Maputo, Beira and Nampula for women members of political parties, constituency groups, members of elected bodies, political party leaders, and local leaders. This initiative has shown positive results. IMD itself reports that at the level of the Assembly of the Republic, the academy has made progress from about 37% (93 women) in the previous mandate to 42% (106) women in the current mandate, in addition to continuing to be chaired by a woman. This increase in numbers has made the country a showcase of success in the representation of women in politics, as Mozambique is now listed

in the second group of countries with the highest number of women in parliament according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) rankings.

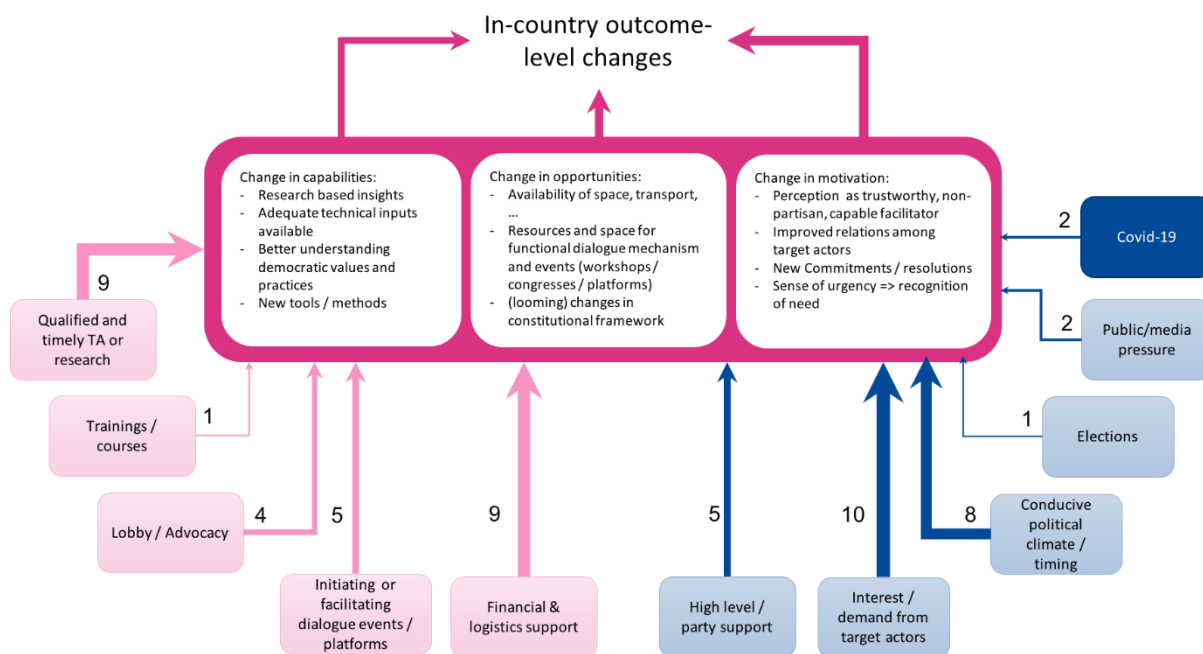
While we have seen changes in women's participation in politics in SPDD countries, there remains a need to ensure that these changes remain durable and more resistant to being reversed. Among the promising contributors to this durability are a focus on the cost of politics at the actor level, quotas enshrined in electoral laws at the system level, and fully gender-balanced cohorts in democracy schools at the political culture level, especially when making space for aspiring young politicians.

4.1.3 Contribution analysis at the country level

Overall, twelve contribution cases have been analysed, with ten cases examining factors that contributed to a substantiated positive outcome-level change, and two cases examining the causes behind the absence of an expected outcome-level case. Details of all contribution cases can be found in Annex 3, while an aggregation of the contribution case findings is presented in Figure 5.

For each case, the main contributing factors have been identified and weighed in terms of the significance of their contribution. In line with the COM-B model,¹⁷ we distinguished changes in the capability, opportunities and motivation of targeted actors from underlying contributing factors. These contributing factors have subsequently been categorised, resulting in five types of internal (part of the SPDD interventions) and six types of external factors. Subsequently, the number of cases in which a particular type of contributing factor played a role was counted.

Figure 5 Aggregation of contribution analysis case findings at the country level



This number (next to the arrows) indicates the frequency with which each type of factor occurred as a proxy for their relative importance. Based on this, the evaluation observes the following:

¹⁷ See chapter 3.2 of the inception report.

- All cases contributed to the outcome-level change through a combination of changes in capabilities, opportunities and motivation, illustrating the validity of SPDD’s logic of addressing system-, actor- and culture-level change in combination.
- Capability changes most often relate to new insights from technical advice or research, while changes in opportunities are most often manifested in the shape of increased resources and space for political actors to interact.
- Changes in motivation appear to be most commonly triggered by NIMD’s reputation as a trustworthy and capable facilitator, which is an essential side effect resulting from – and sustained by – a combination of different programme interventions.
- Changes in *democratic space* were a significant factor throughout the contribution analysis. *Democratic space* is defined as going beyond the changing political climate or the fundamental freedoms that define *civic space*. It includes “the rules of the game” that guarantee an even playing field, as well as “the separation of powers, especially the independence of the judiciary”.¹⁸ The trend of shrinking or loosening *democratic space* was used as one of several criteria to select the four country contribution cases: Kenya and Mali were qualified as having stagnant *democratic space*, Myanmar closing, and Ethiopia opening. Contribution analysis in all four countries showed that SPDD country partners have successfully supported capabilities, provided opportunities, and stimulated motivation to the key political parties and civil society actors to play their role in strengthening or safeguarding *democratic space*. In all four countries, interventions were not specifically presented as countering the shrinking *democratic space*, but they supported a conducive environment for parties to operate and interact with civil society. Conversely, where outcomes are “missing” (Kenya and Mali), insufficient *democratic space* was traced back to negative external contributing factors, in particular major political parties exerting a quasi-monopoly of power through BBI (Kenya), and parties being unwilling and unable to fulfil their function of interest aggregation (Mali). These two situations were respectively described as “political parties...actively, or passively, shrinking *democratic space*”.¹⁹
- Qualified and timely TA/research and fitting financial/logistical support are mentioned as key contributing factors in nine out of twelve cases, illustrating the importance of these interventions not only for improving capabilities but also in strengthening the reputation of NIMD as a reliable and capable partner.
- Genuine interest from target actors in the changes being pursued is the most frequently-mentioned external factor, closely followed by the conduciveness of the political climate at the time of the intervention. This illustrates the importance of ascertaining needs-based and well-timed interventions (i.e. finding adequate windows of opportunities in the political climate). The sentiment of being 'forced' into the BBI process in Kenya is also mentioned as one of the factors explaining the limited progress in promoting democracy (= one of the missing outcome cases).
- The endorsement/cooperation of high-level officials/party leaders was referred to as an important contributing factor in two of the three cases in Myanmar, while the absence of this type of support was mentioned as a hindering factor in Kenya and Mali. This illustrates the importance of identifying and involving 'power holders' in pursuing a successful change process.

¹⁸ “Thinking democratically: A Comprehensive Approach to Countering and Preventing ‘Shrinking Space’”, EPD, May 2020. pp. 5-6.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.31.

- Training is only mentioned as a key contributing factor in one of the cases. This may raise questions about the significance of SPDD's training interventions, although this low 'frequency' may also be explained having selected cases in which training efforts are insufficiently represented.

4.2 Effectiveness of international L&A

Main findings

- IL&A efforts have given prominence to the political dimension of international development, most notably at the EU.
- Linking country-level achievements and IL&A – in particular the link from international level gains to country-level ones – is more difficult, and was assessed as partly successful due to limited dedicated efforts and the complexity of influencing large multilateral institutions.

4.2.1 Progress towards IL&A outcomes

IL&A is an important part of NIMD's work, aiming "to promote issues arising in SP programme countries to the international stage." This effort is envisioned in two complementary ways, namely to bring SPDD country cases to the attention of regional and international bodies – chiefly the EU – and to influence the policy agenda of regional and international bodies to devote increasing attention to the political dimension of development. In particular, it advocates broader recognition of the role of political parties as constructive actors in the defence, support and consolidation of democratic systems. While these two approaches were initially designed to be mutually reinforcing, we have found that the latter (strategic policy influencing) has achieved more success and visibility than the former (country-based L&A).

We assessed the effectiveness of SPDD's IL&A approaches based on a review of intended and actual IL&A results with the EU, UN and regional bodies, while adding depth through a contribution analysis of three outcomes related to IL&A interventions (focusing on the EU). Two outcomes were confirmed as having been successfully achieved: (i) non-partisan political party support is referenced in official EU documentation (outcome 1), and (ii) the concept of shrinking *democratic space* was placed solidly on the agenda at a high-level event in February 2020 attended by high-level representatives of the European Parliament, DG Development, External Action Service and several CSO networks (outcome 3). Another one (outcome 2) had been identified from the outset of this evaluation as a "partly realised one", namely the linkage "between IL&A results and country-level changes". Contribution analysis qualified this diagnosis and helped to establish causal factors explaining this limited success. It is understood that deliberate thinking and efforts are still needed if IL&A is to be connected to country programmes and back.

Outcome 1: Non-partisan political party support referenced in official EU documentation

In this assessment of EU IL&A, we have found that NIMD significantly benefits from its relationship with an organisation that it co-founded and deeply trusts: EPD, a partnership of European democracy support organisations. An essential contributor to success towards this outcome was NIMD's decision during SPDD's design phase to carry out an EU IL&A campaign through its partner EPD. This early strategic choice was reinforced by NIMD's decision to set apart some funding for EPD's travel to public events and seminars. EPD was thus placed in a favourable position to carry out an intense lobbying campaign backed up by country-based research findings. In addition, EPD's secretariat is highly skilled

in garnering interest among its network of EEAS and DG DEVCO interlocutors around the policy-influencing agenda that EPD and NIMD jointly identified. A sense of changing ‘zeitgeist’ certainly existed at EEAS and DG DEVCO in favour of a more assertive type of democracy support. This slow opening to political party support was illustrated by a 2016 thematic grant of the commission for political party support. However, the advocacy work of EPD – in particular its participation in decisive COHOM meetings over EU Council conclusions – as well as the research-based lobbying in partnership with Carnegie Europe were instrumental to the inclusion of non-partisan political party support in the new EU Conclusions on Democracy and Human Rights (2019). This shift in the EU’s policy framework is expected to materialise in improved funding opportunities for future work by NIMD.

Outcome 2: The limited linkage between IL&A results and country-level changes

Regarding links between IL&A results and country-level changes, we have found that the two approaches (strategic and country-level) do not fully combine and can easily be perceived as two stand-alone activities, one being strategically thought out and continuously monitored, while the other is country-specific and thus depends on whether the country programme officer proactively pursues it. IL&A on the *democratic space* stems from an “NIMD/AWEPA Research Agenda” in 2017 led by Augustine Magolowondo, which **harnessed local research efforts through in-country case studies in six SPDD countries** (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Georgia, Indonesia, and Kenya). This resulted in a successful IL&A campaign (with EPD’s support) to promote the concept of “democratic space” among EU decision-makers (see outcome 3 below). In this regard, the link from country-level work towards IL&A campaigning is clear. However, the reverse is less obvious considering that this concept of *democratic space* **is rarely used in SPDD country documents**, and a pledge in 2017 to build a holistic “assessment framework of the *democratic space* for political parties and party assistance providers”²⁰ akin to “a political economy analysis for the *democratic space*”²¹ has not quite permeated SPDD country partner teams and their intervention logic. There is a similar sense of an incomplete connection between the country and strategic level (i.e. NIMD HQ) when assessing the learning agenda (see chapter 4.7 Internal Learning). **This suggests a gap between the IL&A and research agendas on the one hand, and country programming and implementation on the other.**

Similarly, EPD’s successful IL&A effort to promote “non-partisan political party support” (outcome 1) is based on its country work experience. However, it is difficult to assess how much this IL&A success can be credited for NIMD’s successful lobbying at the country level with EU delegations to secure new funding. EPD has certainly trained NIMD staff on how to approach EU delegations, which must have played a role in ensuring local EU support for country programmes. However, it is noted that IL&A work vis-à-vis the EU at the HQ level is focused on policy, which can only have an indirect impact on country-level financial support by EU delegations. Another reason for this limited connection is more structural, namely the fact that country-level decisions are made in the country by EU delegations, and not in Brussels by DG DEVCO and even less so by EEAS, despite the existence of ‘geo desks’ in Brussels whose influence with EU delegations widely differs from person to person. However, thanks to EPD’s lobbying and advocacy, it is now more common that DG DEVCO recommends NIMD to EU delegations as a trusted partner, in a context in which – thanks to IL&A efforts – the EU is now more amenable to non-partisan political party support.

²⁰ Presentation by Augustine Magolowondo at round table discussion on “Shrinking Democratic Space – What it Means for Political Parties and Political Parties’ Assistance Providers”.

²¹ Idem.

At least two country-level achievements by NIMD can be traced back to a combination of L&A efforts at both the EU delegation and HQ levels: funding by the EU delegation of the Ethiopia dialogue programme, building the capacity of political parties, and the establishment of the Ethiopian Democracy Academy, as well as an EU delegation project in Honduras tailored to NIMD’s methodology and human resources. In Honduras – like in other Central American countries where NIMD is active – the impending termination of Dutch MoFA funding has sparked a proactive response by NIMD programme staff to seek alternative sources of funding, chiefly with the EU. This led to a degree of **coordination between the local EU delegation and DG DEVCO in Brussels** to shape the call for proposal of an EU project that matched the SPDD country partners’ thematic focus and skills. As Central America is not a priority region for the Dutch MoFA, L&A is unambiguously framed as a means to build new partnerships and funding opportunities. This shift is also suggested by the creation of a position of “senior advisor strategic relations” whose tasks include ensuring that the follow-on programmes in the region continue to operate without MoFA funding, which has been achieved through numerous rounds of negotiation with interlocutors in Brussels (chiefly with “geo desks” at DG DEVCO and EEAS) and several bilateral (e.g. Sweden) or non-governmental donors (Open Society Foundation, Ford Foundation, etc.). However, based on our interviews, it is quite clear that NIMD understands that country-level gains from L&A with regional and international organisations – i.e. other than by directly approaching EU delegations – do not automatically translate into gains at country level and can sometimes only happen after several years.

Outcome 3: Placing the concept of shrinking democratic space solidly on the EU agenda

As explained above, some linkage exists from country-level to strategic-/international-level L&A, as observed through the contribution analysis regarding the inclusion of *shrinking democratic space* in the EU agenda. Although shrinking *civic* space is the more generally-used phrase to refer to growing restrictions to political participation across the world, the newer phrase of ‘shrinking *democratic* space’ – developed through NIMD and EPD’s research efforts (see above) – is less commonly used. Together with EPD, NIMD had decided to push for this concept prior to SPDD’s launch, bringing the focus on political actors (such as political parties) rather than merely civil society (as civic space would suggest). NIMD then commissioned **case studies from its SPDD countries** concerning how shrinking *civic* space affects *shrinking democratic space*. Although this initiative sits squarely within NIMD’s learning agenda, it was thought out as early as SPDD’s design phase as an important piece of the IL&A strategy. For this purpose, research findings had to be presented publicly to the most appropriate EU leaders, at the most effective time in the EU’s policy-making calendar. NIMD and EPD twice-yearly meetings on IL&A strategy helped to find the ‘perfect’ timing for that event, i.e. one month before the EU Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights was announced. As already noted, NIMD’s partnership with EPD was decisive in achieving those results. Another factor is that jointly-organised events must be well timed and aligned with the regional or international policy-making calendar.

International lobbying and advocacy with the United Nations

This was also the case with another initiative under NIMD’s IL&A work, namely its advocacy towards the UN. This work is carried out together with a new umbrella body with eighteen member organisations, the Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy (GPMD), which was founded in 2016. The most significant actions to date was NIMD’s participation in the Rome preparatory summit (NIMD) for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) of the UN to review SDG16 in 2019 (GPMD). As a key member of GPMD, NIMD has co-authored the Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+. However, we found

it unclear how much concrete impact this declaration is likely to yield as it took place in a vastly more extensive framework than the comparatively small "Brussels bubble" of European foreign policy influencers. In addition, while the EU field combines the policy framework with country-level funding through EU delegations, the same cannot be said of the UN system. Nonetheless, it should be noted that GPMD is a useful long-term vehicle to ensure that non-partisan political party support can become an important feature of democracy support and placed on the world map, beyond its recent acceptance in EU policy circles.

International lobbying and advocacy with regional bodies

IL&A in West Africa towards the ECOWAS regional body was initially also meant to be carried out by GPMD, as its chairperson was then based in Mali. However, we found no indication that this took place, nor that there was any involvement by GPMD in the current work of NIMD in Mali. We understand that this action was postponed several times to enable for the ongoing re-organisation due to the prior "reboot" of SPDD West Africa programmes through country-specific PEAs. In the second half of 2019, contacts were made with the Dakar-based Gorée Institute, a pan-African think tank with a good track record of producing political studies and a strong regional network. A partnership was signed between NIMD and Gorée Institute in May 2020, with the complementary objectives of working jointly on research – chiefly on the nexus between political stability and the consolidation of peace in the Sahel – and gaining access to the ECOWAS secretariat in Abuja. Using a methodology similar to the one successfully tested with EPD (as described above), the partnership is expected to present the conclusions of those studies to multiple actors (including ECOWAS representatives) through an event in Dakar organised by Gorée Institute, and to lobby for the adoption of such a nexus in ECOWAS governing documents.

In this context, one question regarding GPMD is how this umbrella body in which most African members are Centres for Multiparty Dialogue (CMDs) will weather the current overhaul of NIMD's approach to local country partners (re. Mali and Kenya, where cooperation with CMDs was terminated). As GPMD's ability to impact the policy framework on a global scale is doubtful and given its strong dependence on CMDs in sub-Saharan Africa, NIMD's recent decision to team up with the highly respected Dakar-based Gorée Institute for its IL&A towards ECOWAS is a sign pointing in the right direction. It was suggested that NIMD seized the opportunity offered by the coup d'État in Mali to influence ECOWAS through open letters and lobbying via the MINUSMA UN operation. This may be a more practical and direct approach than one focusing on political party support, a methodology that is being reconsidered in NIMD's programme in the Sahel.

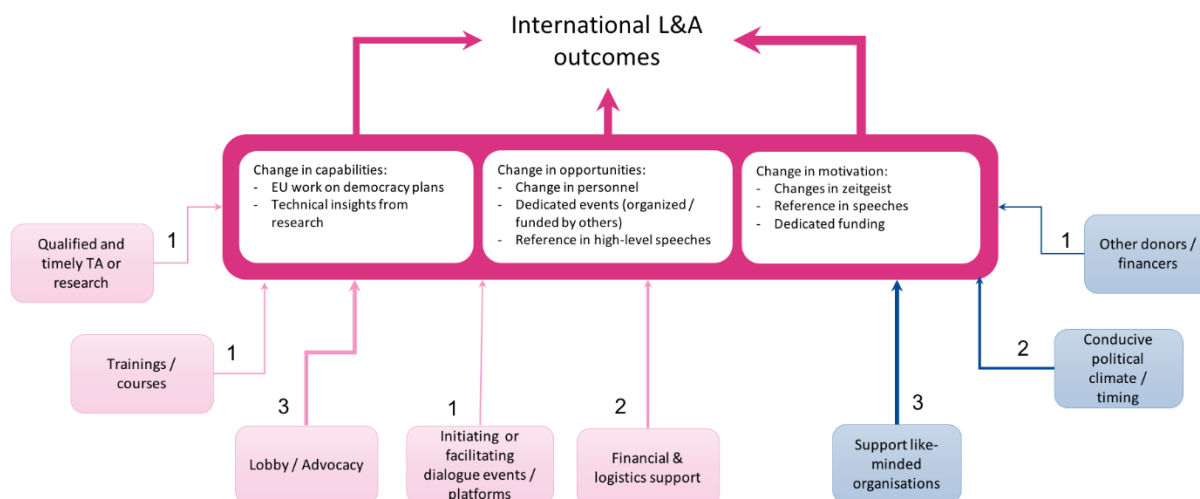
Our key finding concerning IL&A is that NIMD's work in IL&A should be carried out through partnerships with very strong counterparts that are well connected and credible in their respective political "ecosystems" to ensure its effectiveness, as is clearly the case with EPD. We found that although GPMD is a useful body to strengthen ties between like-minded organisations around NIMD, Demo Finland and others, it lacks the political flair and know-how of the small but dynamic secretariat of EPD in Brussels.

4.2.2 Contribution analysis IL&A

Three contribution cases related to the SPDD's international L&A interventions have been examined: (1) reference to non-partisan political party support in EU policy documents, (2) the weak linkage

between IL&A results and country-level changes (i.e. absent change), and (3) the inclusion of the concept of shrinking democratic space on the agenda of a high-level event in February 2020. Similar to the country-level contribution cases, we have categorised contributing factors and looked at the frequency of factors as a proxy for their importance (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 Aggregation of contribution analysis case findings at the international level



From the combined three contribution cases, the evaluation observes the following:

- Contributions are largely indirect and take place in a complex context (many actors and multiple interests), making the significance of SPDD contributions less obvious and strong. The exception to this is the IL&A through EPD to integrate non-partisan support to political parties in the EU external development policies, whereby SPDD funding, joint lobbying and a strong like-minded partnership have been instrumental.
- The limited contribution of IL&A to country-level change is largely explained by the dependence on institutional linkages within target organisations from the central to the country level, which is beyond the control of the SPDD. Accordingly, ensuring that L&A results at the central level receive follow-up action at the country level (or vice versa) therefore require continuous and well-concerted SPDD efforts at both levels, on a scale that is not foreseen under the current programme.
- Remarkable differences between country-level and IL&A contributions relate to 1) the need to establish and work through alliances, and 2) taking part in and making use of events/opportunities created by others, rather than by organising own events. The possibility of such diverse L&A strategies is listed in the programme document, albeit without clear ideas in terms of distinguishing strategies for international L&A from country-level L&A.
- Unsurprisingly, in terms of IL&A it again appears that timing is everything. Repeatedly connecting to the most suitable platforms/events at the right time with strong well-prepared and consistent inputs (e.g. evidence-based research findings) can be a significant contribution. However, the effect of these contributions will remain uncertain given the multitude of factors and forces at play.

4.3 Validity of the theory of change

Main findings

- Overall the ToC is valid but not suitable as a framework for planning and reporting. The adoption of actor-based pathways is a step forward.
- The SPDD is clearly positioned as a capable neutral partner working on the party-parliament nexus, and it demonstrates flexibility in working with other actors when progress with parties becomes stalled.
- The SPDD's ability to combine context-sensitive interventions rather than specific individual interventions appears to be key in making a significant contribution towards desired outcomes.
- The validity of key assumptions is diverse: some are stretched in time, and others only hold under certain conditions, although the assumption that long-term exposure to democratic value helps in changing attitudes holds.

4.3.1 Validity of overall ToC

During the MTR, it was concluded that pursuing S-A-C change in combination conceptually makes sense, as it addresses three essential complementary dimensions for lasting progress towards multi-party democracy. Despite rather clear definitions of these three dimensions of change, at the operational level this conceptual logic proved to be complicated. Activities in pursuit of these three dimensions are so closely related that in planning and reporting the same activities and results recur under different result areas (e.g. joint meetings of political parties are presented as steps towards system change, while also being reported as efforts to influence the capabilities and willingness of actors involved to engage in multi-party consultation on a more permanent basis).

In response to the MTR, we see NIMD taking steps towards introducing more actor-based pathways of change, which is widely perceived as a step forward in making the ToC a more practical framework to guide planning and reporting efforts. At the same time, the earlier-observed repetition of results can still be seen in 2019 country reports, illustrating that the roll-out of ToC-related changes with partners at the country level takes time. In this sense, NIMD's decision to maintain the S-A-C triangle as an overall 'corporate' vision while introducing actor-based pathways in country-level ToCs in its new programme designs looks promising, especially since NIMD appears to embrace a logic where system and culture change is pursued through actors, more clearly illustrating how the three core dimensions of NIMD's overall ToC are connected.

Another aspect related to the SPDD's conceptual thinking relates to the testing of the *party-parliament (P-P) nexus* embodied in the original NIMD-AWEPA partnership behind the SPDD programme. The demise of AWEPA meant that testing the *P-P-nexus* as originally envisaged could not take place in full, except for countries where NIMD partners were already experienced in working with parliament and therefore less dependent on AWEPA (Mozambique, Zimbabwe). However, the SPDD experiences also indicate that working towards multi-party democracy may require working with a group of stakeholders that is broader than political parties and parliamentarians. In particular, in countries where the role of and/or connections of political parties with civil society appears to be relatively weak, we see the SPDD increasingly working with civil society actors (e.g. Mali, Kenya, Indonesia).

Put differently, we see the SPDD putting a *party-society (P-S) nexus* in practice in countries where progress with the original PP approach is slow or stalled. The evaluation sees this as a clear example of adaptive programming. Unfortunately, it is too early to see the effects of this programmatic adaptation, while the evaluation also notes the caution expressed by some MoFA and NIMD staff that working with CS actors risks reducing the perceived uniqueness of NIMD.

Finally, when looking at some key assumptions underlying the original ToC, we observe the following:

- The assumption that bringing parties together will lead to changed rules and regulations in the political system and enlargement of formal democratic space can only be tested in a timeframe that well exceeds the SPDD timespan. The programme has certainly demonstrated that bringing parties together helps in formulating joint agendas and intentions for system-level improvement, but in many cases the road towards actual and lasting system change proves too long to be convincingly demonstrated in SPPD's timespan.
- The assumption that political parties have a basic structure to absorb capacity development proves risky. The engagement of party leadership and the power position of a party at a given time appear to be factors that have a strong effect on the interest, responsiveness and thus the absorption of capacity-building efforts.
- The validity of the assumption that exposure to different norms and values can help in changing democratic attitudes and behaviour seems to be proven by the success of democracy schools, whether on a small or local scale. The longer-lasting exposure in combination with a genuine interest of participants and endorsement of senior political actors appear to be key ingredients for this success.

4.3.2 Validity of ToC at the country level

As mentioned above, bringing the ToC alive as a management tool at the country level remains difficult. At present, the overall ToC is still primarily seen as a communication tool by which the SPDD partnership can communicate its vision to internal and external stakeholders. The initial reactions from NIMD staff in the Hague and in-country partner staff to introducing more actor-based pathways are positive, although it is too early to see these pathways used widely as frameworks for planning and reporting. The evaluation expects that the more systematic introduction of an actor-based ToC in the design of NIMD's new programmes will help in making the ToC more useful as a management tool at the country level.

In theory, the design and adaptation of country-level ToCs are informed by PEAs, but this reportedly is not yet a regular and common practice across all countries, as some country programmes are still felt to reflect more 'business as usual' than an evidence-based response to thorough problem analysis. In line with this – and notwithstanding that opinions about the quality of PEAs still differ – the emerging practice of making more regular and systematic use of a PEA as a basis for making programmatic choices at the country level is largely regarded as positive within both NIMD and MoFA.

Finally, the evaluation encountered a concern – in particular among NIMD programme staff – that the efforts of the standardised and somewhat forced use of programme management tools like PEA and ToC at the country level outweigh their benefits. They feel that these tools are still seen and treated as 'Western', holding limited relevance to the turbulent and unpredictable political contexts of SPDD's programme countries, and hence being primarily of use to meet donor demands.

4.3.3 Role and scope of the SPDD

The SPDD has been shaped under the corporate vision of NIMD of “inclusive and transparent democracies through stronger political parties” and it aligns with NIMD’s overall ToC, pursuing S-A-C change. Its explicit focus on strengthening political parties positions the SPDD as unique programme among a much wider international effort in pursuit of (multi-party) democracy. At the same time, its positioning implies that the SPDD by definition operates within an always-loaded political landscape, whereby being perceived as an impartial and capable facilitator is essential to sustain the credibility of the programme. From the contribution cases, it became apparent that the SPDD largely succeeds in maintaining this position and reputation, although we also saw that a shift towards working with other actors was needed in certain countries (Mali, Benin), when progress in working directly with political parties became stalled. This illustrates that despite its deliberate positioning, the SPDD allowed sufficient flexibility to adapt to circumstances.

The reflection on ToC assumptions also illustrates that the SPDD pursues an ambitious scope of complex changes in political systems and behaviour that is not likely to be completed in the timespan of a five-year programme. SPDD staff at both NIMD and country partners are clearly aware of this, whereby actual programme implementation is the result of a variety of choices in activities (i.e. scoping in terms of what to do when with whom and how). These choices are largely left to the discretion and political acumen of partners and they are generally understood as signs of adaptive programming. The outcome cases illustrate that SPDD contributions take place through a range of complementary activities and that the relevance and reputation of the SPDD are served by a combination of context-sensitive efforts rather than one specific type of interventions. These contributions can be symbolic or small (e.g. the costs of a meeting venue) and when provided by a reputable neutral partner who is also known to be capable of ascertaining adequate facilitation, the SPDD has added the ingredients that it can to maximise the chance of a successful intervention. The only type of SPDD intervention that appears to be ‘under-represented’ as a contributing factor is individual training activities,²² although this may be the result of having worked with limited cases in which training activities may have been less prominent.

Despite the diversity and apparent significance of its contributions, the evaluation findings also illustrate that expectations about wider and longer-term impact need to remain modest, partly because the scale of programme activities is small in light of the wider scheme of political events in a country, and partly because the interventions take place in a constantly-changing and unpredictable context. This means that a highly successful intervention (e.g. advocacy for women quota) does not guarantee quick success or follow-up, as it can be ignored or lose relevance whenever power shifts occur. This again reconfirms the validity of the overall ToC, pursuing S-A-C change in combination, but also that this change requires a long and winding journey to be completed by small patient steps.

²² Excluding longer-term training programmes/courses provided by democracy schools.

4.4 Financial efficiency

Main findings

- Budget depletion is increasing over time, but with substantial differences per country.
- The proportion of direct vs. indirect programme costs is stable between 75% and 80%.
- Increasing investments in K&R and PME over time to 7.6% of the total.
- A continuous balancing act to maintain financial accountability and respect partner autonomy.

The evaluation assesses the financial efficiency of the SPDD by looking at trends in specific efficiency-related indicators, including the budget depletion rate, ratio direct/indirect costs, budget distribution among direct and indirect costs, and signs of cost-conscious management behaviour.

Table 6 Budget depletion

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Original budget	-	-	€6,721,789	€6,430,227
Approved overall budget	€6,631,190	€7,199,077	€6,065,558	€7,206,721
Actual overall expenditure	€5,314,501	€6,064,021	€5,187,191	€6,541,027
Budget depletion rate	80%	84%	86%	91%

As can be seen from table 6 above, the actual usage of funds available (i.e. budget depletion) has increased as the programme matured. This is partly explained by programmatic adaptations, which translated into changes in budget allocations (e.g. Indonesia less, Ethiopia more), but also a continued regular review of budget allocations and use at fixed moments in time (mid-year review and annual planning). NIMD finance staff are aware of the risk of inappropriate spending when addressing the apparent under-utilisation of funds and they mitigate this risk by ensuring consultation with programme staff. The apparent budget control from NIMD in the Hague appears effective from an accountability perspective, but it also receives criticism in terms of reducing the autonomy and ownership of partners, irrespective of their level of maturity and past performance. This stretch between control and autonomy is recognised by NIMD management as a continued challenge for future programmes, not only between NIMD and its in-country partners but also between NIMD and MoFA.

At the same time, significant differences remain in budget depletion per country (e.g. an average of 3% overspending in Central America, versus average depletion rates below 80% in Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia). These differences are partly explained by unpredictable contextual changes, meaning that those foreseen activities cannot take place. At the same time, budget accuracy remains a challenge due to different price levels among countries and price fluctuations over time within countries. Besides, activity-based budgeting of lobby and advocacy work is known to be difficult due to the need to adapt to the nature and scale of L&A work to circumstances and emerging opportunities. Finally, practical choices (e.g. choice of hotel, group size) during implementation may make activities much more or less expensive than foreseen (e.g. explaining that in Indonesia over 30 events could be organised within a budget that foresaw six to eight events).

Despite these complications, the NIMD finance department continues its efforts to harmonise pricing among countries (e.g. making use of independent international standards to determine pay scales, setting standards for per diems), and tries to be alert to remarkable price differences.

Overhead costs for the programme are contractually fixed at 12.5% of the programme budget, which renders it invalid as an indicator of efficiency. The finance department indicates that this amount is sufficient to cover actual overhead costs. The proposed practice of allocating Euro 200,000 per country office under the new programmes²³ enables gaining insights into differences in financial efficiency among countries once they have broken down their budget in detail.

Table 7 Expenditure per region and cost category (in Euro)

	2016		2017		2018		2019	
Programme expenditures Africa	2,970,869	55.9%	3,117,736	51.4%	2,479,520	47.8%	3,483,299	53.3%
Programme expenditures non-Africa	1,256,597	23.6%	1,252,968	20.7%	1,356,827	26.2%	1,359,113	20.8%
International L&A	156,927	3.0%	254,892	4.2%	197,093	3.8%	253,794	3.9%
Knowledge and research (K&R)	102,596	1.9%	189,008	3.1%	127,304	2.5%	200,634	3.1%
Coordination costs	127,673	2.4%	174,775	2.9%	123,249	2.4%	133,513	2.0%
Overheads	590,500	11.1%	936,067	15.4%	648,370	12.5%	817,593	12.5%
Institutional PME	109,338	2.1%	138,574	2.3%	254,828	4.9%	293,082	4.5%
	5,314,500	100%	6,064,020	100%	5,187,191	100%	6,541,028	100%

Table 7 above illustrates expenditures per region and cost category. From this, it appears that the proportion of indirect programme expenditures allocated to the programme (K&R, coordination, overheads, and PME) has shown an increase from 17.5% in 2016 to 23.7% in 2017, before subsequently remaining stable around 22%. In absolute terms, the increase of expenditures on K&R and PME has more than doubled from Euro 210,000 in 2016 to Euro 495,000 in 2019. This increase illustrates a perceived need to professionalise and give more prominence to the PME and knowledge function in NIMD, with the under-expenditure at the country level allowing the financial space to do so. Overall, the K&R and PME function together account for 7.5% of total programme costs in 2019, which the evaluation considers to be quite reasonable.

²³ N.B. The purpose of the Euro 200,000 budget allocation per country is to combine the need to be predictable in funding while retaining financial space to adapt budgets per country based on needs and performance.

4.5 Sustainability

Main findings

- The need for sustainable change is embedded in NIMD's multi-dimensional ToC.
- Sustainability is an important consideration in NIMD's programme management decisions, despite not often being referred to explicitly.
- NIMD's strategy to increasingly work with its 'own' offices risks undermining sustainability, but this risk can be successfully managed.
- Evolution of support to partners takes place rather organically in the absence of a deliberate phase-out/exit strategy, leading to differences in working with partners.
- Sustainability-related conditions include (1) the need for longer-term and/or repetitive exposure to the value of constructive inclusive policy dialogue, and (2) the active engagement of civil society as a political actor and constant advocate for/reminder of inclusion and accountability.

The evaluation reviews sustainability in two ways. First, we look at conditions and challenges related to the sustainability of SPDD results (i.e. the extent to which changed systems or practices (are likely to) continue beyond the timespan of the SPDD). Second, we look at particular efforts made under the SPDD programme to ascertain or increase the chance of sustainable results.

In terms of conditions that facilitate the sustainability of results, the evaluation observes the following;

- Anchoring efforts and results in local organisations dedicated to pursuing democratisation helps in strengthening the sustainability of those results. Georgia and Mozambique are regularly quoted as positive examples where a dedicated organisation has been established and then matured into an independent organisation that continues pursuing multi-party democracy on its own.
- Longer-term and repetitive exposure to democratic standards and values – as practised through the democracy schools and dialogue mechanisms that regularly meet – are seen to lead to a more sustainable change in attitude and behaviour.
- The earlier-mentioned introduction of a *P-S nexus* in which political actors and civil society are brought together and create a sense of mutual accountability may prove to be a strong strategy towards sustainable results, which worthy of further testing in future programmes.

A particular sustainability challenge is implied in the SPDD's ToC, which recognises the need for culture change and the stability of actors to sustain system change. In other words, completing the full S-A-C triangle is needed for changes to be sustainable, which is not easily accomplished within the timespan of the SPDD nor at the scale required (critical mass). Linked to this is the challenge that SPDD progress does not take place in a static vacuum, but rather is continuously exposed to socio-economic forces that affect political and/or democratic practices.

Besides these conditions and challenges, various practices under SPDD can be seen that (are meant to) stimulate the sustainability of results, including the following:

- The earlier-mentioned inclusion of 'culture' change in the SPDD's conceptual framework illustrates the acknowledgement that changes in norms and values of a critical mass are required for a system or actor change to be sustainable.

- The original programme document includes a deliberate sustainability approach recognising the need to operate demand-driven through capable local partners, although the operationalisation and follow-up on this approach are left to individual programme staff.
- ‘Resets’ of programmes, where different partners (Kenya and Mali) or different approaches (Indonesia) were adopted to achieve better and more sustainable results.
- A transfer of ‘rules of engagement’ in political dialogue from one generation of democracy school ‘students’ to the next generation of elected officials (Myanmar).
- SPPD results being actively used to generate confidence, interest and (financial) support from other donors (Honduras, Georgia, and Ethiopia).
- IL&A efforts deliberately targeting the inclusion of political parties in international development policies and instruments (EU).

NIMD's strategy to increasingly work through 'own' offices (Ethiopia, Myanmar) rather than through independent partners can be seen as somewhat controversial from a sustainability perspective. This strategy implies that partners start out being fully dependent on NIMD and not rooted within the programme country itself. NIMD management indicates that in some countries this is the only option in the absence of a like-minded, reputable and impartial organisation directly working with political parties on democratisation. This seems to have worked in the case of Georgia and Mozambique, as these NIMD offices have matured into independent organisations dedicated to pursuing democratisation and the ability to diversify their resource base to sustain themselves. In other countries, centres for multiparty democracy were created with representatives of political parties as board members, which worked out less well, particularly in terms of maintaining impartiality. The lessons from these practices are important to ensure that this strategy works well in creating effective self-reliant local partners.

The evolution with partners as described above appears to take place through rather organic processes, which are not part of a deliberate partnership strategy. Similarly, no explicit exit strategies or procedures are in place describing when and how the phasing-out of the financial and/or programmatic cooperation is supposed to take place. Instead, several ‘phasing-out’ practices can be observed that are applied on a case-to-case basis, in particular where relationships are good. Most prominent among these is NIMD’s support in fundraising, whereby NIMD puts its network at the disposal of the partner, builds capacity and actively makes joint efforts to trigger the interest of relevant funding agencies (e.g. embassies, multilateral agencies and sometimes national government). Another practice is supporting the partner in establishing itself formally as NGO, which was successfully done in Georgia, Mozambique and Benin. However, this practice is not applied across the board, as in some countries (e.g. Central America) partners are expected to continue as NIMD COs but become increasingly self-reliant in fundraising as funding through MFA subsidy frameworks has become increasingly difficult due to policy changes within the ministry.

A critical observation in this context relates to the sentiment expressed by former partners that have become independent NGOs that when NIMD funding stops the contact with NIMD also dries up. This is regrettable as interest remains in continuing the partnership and exchanging experiences, including without a funding relationship.

In addition, there have been cases where the collaboration was terminated (Ghana, CMD-Kenya) by NIMD when the quality of partnership had been experienced as problematic for a longer time with little sign of progress. It appears that such decisions – which usually mark the end of the relation – are not taken lightly, but without a clear exit strategy in place.

4.6 Effects of external programmatic shocks

Main findings

- The effect of the demise of AWEPA on the overall programme results has been limited, as several NIMD country partners had prior experience in working with parliament, while in other programme countries former AWEPA staff were absorbed by the SPDD programme.
- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were most strong in the second quarter of 2020. There are various signs of adaptation and continuation soon after, though the pandemic has certainly led to a range of disruptions in programme implementation.
- There are understandable concerns about how the pandemic has affected political freedoms.

4.6.1 Effects of AWEPA's demise

One of SPDD's key features when it was designed was the joint approach between NIMD and AWEPA, based on a partnership that had started back in 2011. This promised the possibility of a comprehensive approach combining political party assistance and parliamentary support, including the promise of being able to support the implementation of reform agendas developed through inter-party dialogue processes. AWEPA's demise in 2017 caused an organisational shock that prompted the programme to deeply reorganise.

The MFA expressed appreciation that early signs of AWEPA's possible demise were shared well before this outcome was formally communicated. This reduced the 'suddenness' of the event and meant that both NIMD and MFA had already thought about possible actions to mitigate the effects of the demise. The programme thus showed a remarkable ability to withstand this sudden shift. Partners often had had prior experience of working with parliament (not exclusively through AWEPA) and parliamentary support was often channelled through the local partners who remained (Zimbabwe, Mozambique).

The negative effects of AWEPA's demise were also mitigated by taking over staff employed by AWEPA, as was the case in Mali, Kenya and Benin, which enabled work to continue, albeit with some delays. In Ethiopia, the disappearance of AWEPA reportedly simplified cooperation and coordination, allowing for increased efficiencies. However, despite this limited effect on the overall of scale operations, less attention was given to the parliamentary component of SPDD. The important nexus between political parties and parliament could not be tested as originally envisaged in the programme design. Such a gap can be lamented in countries in which SPDD successfully supports the connection between inter-party dialogue and parliamentary work.

However, in most countries under SPDD – except perhaps Benin – the absence of AWEPA has been overcome by re-arranging work with existing or new partners. This means that the nexus between political parties and parliament was indeed tested and seen to be working (Ethiopia, Honduras Mozambique, Uganda, Zimbabwe). It can also be said that AWEPA helped get the ball rolling at the

beginning of the programme because parliament proved to be an easier entry point than political parties. This is the case in Mali, where until recently NIMD worked out of the former AWEPA office that was directly located within the premises of parliament offering direct access to the country's political actors.

The difficulties incurred by AWEPA's demise have now resulted in a coordinated effort at NIMD to draw a lesson about the costs and risks of working in a partnership with a fellow organisation. This includes an analysis of coordination budget, avoiding strong separations of workstreams, as well as the type of contractual arrangements to be sought with alliance partners. Another lesson to be learned is that when partnerships are deemed useful, it would be important to ensure the development of a truly joint programme. Such a programme makes use of complementary strengths, albeit without overly-strict and separate task distributions so that one partner can more easily step in or take over activities when needed.

4.6.2 Effects of COVID-19 pandemic

Since early 2020, the world has been facing the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also strongly affected programme implementation, as working routines have been interrupted while gatherings of people and travel have been restricted both internationally and within countries. As the pandemic is not yet over, it is too early to draw final conclusions about the effects of the crisis on the programme. However, financial staff indicate that after an initial slowdown in the second quarter of 2020, programme expenditures have been picking up, illustrating that the partnership has (at least partly) restarted operations. In light of this, the evaluation aims to provide a (non-exhaustive) overview of the most immediate effects and capture initial experiences of the partnership in dealing with the pandemic.

The most worrisome effect is reportedly in political freedoms being endangered by authorities taking measures that bypass regular democratic rules and regulations (e.g. ruling by decree, delaying elections), with the urgency of having to control the virus as justification. The fear of the pandemic being used to justify illegitimate measures to retain or strengthen political powers is obvious and clear, although it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to draw overall conclusions on the legitimacy of these measures and their ultimate effect on political freedoms.

Nevertheless, in some countries (Mozambique, Georgia) SPDD responses are seen to protect democratic space. Using earlier-established dialogue platforms, programme partners disseminate Covid rules and regulations and/or collect information concerning how the population perceive those measures as a way to keep the government informed and accountable.

Besides, we also see various responses illustrating efforts to continue the original programme under Covid circumstances. Examples include democracy classes being moved online, a move to small-scale (under the mango tree) local dialogue activities (Mali), and a reinvigoration of digital activities among young activists (Mali, Kenya, Honduras, El Salvador). It appears that finding Covid-proof ways to continue work with established groups that are relatively familiar with digital tools has been possible. Access to digital tools and functioning internet connections are obviously preconditions for this, while it is too early to assess the effect of these responses, especially in comparison to the programme's intended interventions.

At the same time, the evaluation also observes a number of examples of Covid-related interruptions. These include high-level dialogues being stopped for months (Uganda, Benin), programme activities with municipalities outside the capital being halted (Guatemala), bringing democracy school cohorts together with beneficiaries of other interventions no longer being possible (Benin), and fundraising efforts being considered untimely. In addition, Covid was explicitly referred to as a hindering factor in two contribution cases (Ethiopia and Myanmar).

Overall, it appears that the Covid-19 pandemic has certainly affected the SPDD, but not to the extent that the programme has come to a complete halt. Where possible, country partners have found ways to localise activities or move them online. It seems that this works reasonably well when it concerns the continuation of work with already-established groups on relatively practical and less sensitive topics. However, when initiating new work streams or when high-level and sensitive political interests are at stake, finding Covid-resilient ways of working remains a challenge.

4.7 Internal learning²⁴

Main findings

- Growing investments over time illustrate the increasing importance attached to learning under the SPDD programme.
- Signs of internal learning from M&E efforts are most obvious in relation to the MTR results. In addition, reported examples of learning are partly attributed to the outcome harvesting exercises.
- The SPDD undertakes different types of learning activities, which are implemented with varying levels of success/satisfaction.
- Despite the apparent results and prominence of learning in the SPDD programme, there is a broad sense of dissatisfaction with the organisation of learning function in the programme related to the way in which learning function is organised and recognised.

Over time, internal learning has become a more prominent feature of the SPDD, as expenditures for K&R and PME have increased from around Euro 210,000 in 2016 to almost Euro 495,000 in 2019, which allowed for the recruitment of knowledge advisors and additional PME staff. In assessing internal learning results, the evaluation regards the learning effect of the SPDD's increasing M&E efforts, including the MTR, besides reviewing the experiences and effects of the evolving knowledge function in NIMD.

In terms of learning from M&E efforts, the increasing OH efforts and the MTR are most frequently mentioned. At present, deliberate OH efforts have been undertaken in most programme countries to collect behavioural signs of progress towards outcomes. The learning loop of these efforts has not been formally completed, as a comprehensive sense-making of OH findings has not yet taken place. Nevertheless, M&E staff and a few programme managers refer to the use of OH results – always in combination with other information – among others in decisions related to cooperation arrangements

²⁴ Learning is regarded as the extent to which reflections on existing practices and experiences lead to changed practices and procedures in programme management and implementation.

with partners and in revised thinking about the sensibility of capacity development efforts. MoFA staff are aware of NIMD's OH efforts, but OH results are not (yet) part of programmatic discussions.²⁵

The MTR (2018) resulted in 11 recommendations, whose follow-up is tracked and documented, illustrating that in seven of the 11 recommendations specific action has been taken under the ongoing SPDD (e.g. introduction of actor-based pathways, adjusted approach in scoping of the programme in Mali and Ethiopia, collection of qualitative output data). Many of these actions are taken further in the development of future programmes, while for two more recommendations follow-up action is foreseen under the new MAS (e.g. using S-A-C as a vision rather than planning framework and articulating a partnership strategy).

In addition to follow-up from M&E efforts, internal learning is being promoted through a learning agenda that was formulated at the beginning of the programme. This agenda has been put in practice through a range of learning-oriented activities, including peer reviews/learning trips, annual reflection days, and developing knowledge 'products' of common interest like best practice studies, research publications, tools and instruments. In addition, the OH exercises are largely also perceived as learning activities. The perceived effectiveness of the various learning activities is mixed: in-country partners generally regard peer reviews as useful, while the development of knowledge products is often described as 'the Hague-driven' and more useful for external communication than for internal learning, with limited relevance at the country level.

Despite the apparent results and prominence of learning in the SPDD, as demonstrated by the increasing investments and the continued learning efforts, NIMD staff across the board are quite critical about the way in which learning is organised in the organisation. Particular points of criticism include:

- The separation of knowledge advisors from the PME team, and the difficulty of linking thematic advisors to geographical programme teams.
- The absence of a functional learning strategy based on sound in-country learning needs assessment, with clear learning objectives and deliverables responding to the learning needs of clearly defined learning beneficiaries.
- The lack of an institutionalised and complete 'learning system' with agreed processes for identifying and prioritising learning needs, the shaping of knowledge-building processes (e.g. expert research versus exchange), and the way in which new knowledge is to be disseminated and used.
- The lack of managerial steering, meaning that the learning efforts are overly-dependent on the interests and willingness of individuals rather than serving the partnership as a whole.
- The use of knowledge advisors as thematic experts rather than knowledge facilitators.

In light of this criticism, it is unsurprising that a reorganisation of the knowledge function is being considered for future programmes. At the same time, the continued importance of an effective internal learning function is also apparent, given persistent programmatic challenges like political party readiness for capacity development, successfully connecting political parties to people, trust-building with partners and among political actors, etc.

²⁵ The fact that OH has recently gained a somewhat controversial status within MoFA most likely contributes to this.

4.8 Quality of partnerships

Main findings

- The quality of the relationship between NIMD and country partners is characterised by increasing levels of trust and maturity in cooperation balanced with control and autonomy.
- No clear correlation is found between the partnership modality and results. The maturity of the partner and the relationship appear to be more important factors for successful cooperation.
- The quality of relationships with international partners is largely positive, and in particular the partnership with EPD has been fruitful.
- The quality of cooperation with DSH – as a central partner on behalf of MoFA – has shown remarkable improvement since the MTR, while both sides see scope for further improvement.
- The quality of cooperation with embassies remains mixed but overall improved, as evidenced by growing cooperation in terms of networking, funding, and seeking complementarities.

4.8.1 Partners in programme countries

The working history as well as partnership modality of SPDD country partners reflects disparities. Partners in five out of 14 countries have had a 15-20-year-long partnership with NIMD (Guatemala, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe), while the programme in Ethiopia started in 2017. In terms of partnership modality, until 2017 nine out of 15 country partners were NIMD COs (Table 8).

Table 8 Overview of SPDD country partners

Country	SPDD partner	Partner
Benin	NIMD Benin	since 2012
El Salvador	NIMD El Salvador	since 2012
Ethiopia	NIMD representation	since 2017
Georgia	Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD), NGO, former NIMD office	since 2009 (as NGO since 2017)
Ghana	The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)	Since 2002 to 2018
Guatemala	NIMD Guatemala	since 2002
Honduras	NIMD Honduras	since 2011
Indonesia	Kemitraan – Partnership for Governance Reform, NGO	-
Kenya	Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-K), established platform; Mzalendo, NGO	since 2004 since 2005
Mali	NIMD Mali	since 2002
Mozambique	Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD), NGO, former NIMD office	since 2000 (as NGO since 2016)
Myanmar	NIMD Myanmar	since 2014
Uganda	NIMD Uganda	since 2009
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Institute (ZI), NGO	Estab. in 2002

All partners – including NGO partners – have shown a reasonably **high level of trust and maturity in cooperation, admittedly based on like-mindedness, referred to as “NIMD DNA”**. According to respondents – namely leaders of country partner organisations – this DNA comes from the shared

values, including plurality as a basis of democracy and dialogue and civic education as vehicles to peaceful political changes in line with the needs of the population, including the marginalised and poor. These shared values are seemingly well combined with a way of working where country partners are given autonomy – in line with their experience – to work politically, i.e. keep assessing the political climate and adjusting interventions to the emerging needs of political actors.

The quality of collaboration with country partners is furthermore served by **various capacity development efforts that are meant to assist and ensure a more uniform approach in programme management as well as facilitating institutional strengthening**. This primarily concerns guidance and hand-on support in applying methodologies that are apt for the political way of working. Among such methodologies are PEA, which helped partners to formulate country-level ToCs for a well-argued relevant programme design. In addition, partners have benefitted from the introduction of the OH methodology as a tool for gathering and making sense of the complex programmatic results. The appreciation of these capacity development efforts by partners can be seen in them actively using OH not only for programmatic but overall organisational purposes. Furthermore, following the MTR, country partners have been supported in the application of actor-based pathways, which has reportedly helped in providing a more favourable framework for planning and reporting programmatic results. Capacity development of partners related to the content of their work is primarily pursued through the learning agenda formulated as part of the original programme design. As mentioned earlier, this agenda comprised a range of learning activities, whereby in particular peer review visits and the annual reflection weeks are perceived as useful in contributing to becoming more capable partners and a stronger partnership. Finally, NIMD has been supporting partners to establish and strengthen independent NGOs, including collaboration and help in fundraising for institutional sustainability.

Another condition for the political way of working to be successful is that the steer comes from politically-astute leaders with advanced political analysis skills and strong local networks, who do not follow programming commitments blindly but adapt to changing political circumstances. Further, the political leadership of this nature seems to combine well with the “spider in a web” modality, i.e. being connected to multiple actors including civil society partners. This has proven to be effective in many SPDD countries, and is exemplified in Mali much better as a contrast to the former – less successful – CMD-centric approach.

In translating the political way of working to planning, budgeting, delivery and reporting arrangements, **country partners have appreciated the flexibility of tools and procedures put in place by NIMD**. This flexibility – among others – took the shape of relatively loose network structure, conducive for an autonomous way of working. At the same time, it left country partners desiring more interaction with NIMD beyond programme managers, e.g. on guidance to mainstreaming gender into their work, follow-up on the one-time thematic exchange, etc. The loose network structure and flexibility has also implied the limited harmonisation of internal policies with risks to efficiency and arguably delayed insights into partner-related behaviour negatively affecting programme liabilities, such as inaccurate reporting by the country partner in Ghana. While balancing autonomy and flexibility with meticulous checks and balances remains an area of continuous attention, to date NIMD has been able to manage programmatic shocks well and fulfilled its responsibilities as a lead agency (for further information, see chapter 4.5).

Further, when comparing country partners, it appears that NIMD country offices felt the autonomy/ownership of country programmes easily, while NGO country partners – with several other programmes to implement – had asked to clearly outline interventions on annual basis and generally clarify mutual expectations. Nonetheless, there is no evidence to illustrate that partner modality and results are correlated.

The future cooperation between NIMD and country partners is promising but not yet settled. Since the start of the programme, two NIMD offices have become independent NGOs: Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD) in Mozambique in 2016 and the Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD) in Georgia in 2017. One other NIMD office (Benin) has become a separate NGO, while other offices (e.g. Honduras) remain as country office but will increasingly have to rely on their own alternative funding sources. All four have some secured funding, achieved through much-appreciated support and active fundraising by NIMD as part of its exit strategy. Further, with the end of the SPDD programme, financial partnership halts with all NGO country partners aside from one in Kenya (Mzalendo). Both NIMD and the former country partners intend to continue cooperation and joint fundraising for this purpose.

While the partnership policy is still not in place, country partners see multiple advantages of working together – as a true network – and being related to NIMD. There is also an indication that all NIMD offices would be working towards multi-donor programmes and with a diversified donor base, which further shapes the idea of a network of like-minded organisations. Apart from being connected, country partners find connecting to NIMD rather beneficial. In their conviction, this means gaining recognition and diplomatic influence carried by the Netherlands, i.e. the reputation of integrity, impartiality, and political influence, which is very useful to anchor the work with local stakeholders. Remaining an NIMD office more strongly carries this linkage, which implies being invited as both a diplomatic entity and a civil society group.²⁶ This linkage to NIMD and the Netherlands also carries out a broader line of defence against democratic space like when attacking parliament in El Salvador, a communiqué issued by NIMD. Further advantages for keeping linked to NIMD and each other are thematic exchanges on e.g. mechanisms promoting democratic spaces like democracy schools and sharing good practices like the “peace rooms” project of IMD in Mozambique and peer joint capacity development like NIMD training on communication and political party organising as well as adopting OH and actor-based pathways.

4.8.2 International partners

International partnerships are a fundamental feature of a programme spanning several continents and seeking to achieve change beyond country interventions, on a regional and global scale. As presented in chapter 4.2.1 on IL&A, being able to count on trustworthy, skilled, and strongly-networked peer organisations is a condition of success in policy influencing. We found that NIMD’s IL&A interventions and their respective degrees of success are closely linked with the quality of their relations with some key organisations in their field. First and foremost is EPD, with which NIMD enjoys a symbiotic relationship. Put simply, EPD is what makes NIMD’s IL&A work in Brussels effective, made possible by NIMD’s long-term investment in EPD’s foundation and strategy, as well as its regular visits

²⁶ From interviews during this end evaluation

to their offices. Another important element of the relationship with EPD is the latter's mastery in scheduling impactful public events in Brussels around the publication of their research outputs – often based on their member organisations' work in the field – that are well synchronised with Brussels' specific policy-making calendar.

Demo Finland is a peer organisation to NIMD. It belongs to the same umbrella organisations, chiefly EPD as well as GPMD, which it co-founded with NIMD and others. We have found that collaboration between NIMD and Demo Finland has been very fruitful, thanks to their like-mindedness, their ability to exchange and their openness about internal systems and practices. In terms of EPD, we have found their relationship to be symbiotic, as can be seen from Demo Finland's flexibility to work with NIMD systems and procedures.

In the case of GPMD, it is difficult to judge a relatively recent organisation (2016) that is still hardly visible due to a lack of communication around its name and agenda, as its very light online footprint easily suggests. However, we believe that GPMD could become much more visible if it took up and promoted the results of NIMD's learning outputs. In this respect, it could become a sounding board for NIMD's research findings, such as those previously commissioned about the closing democratic space (see above). At the global level, advocacy requires well-orchestrated fact-based campaigns as the Crisis Group has done in the past, or – as a more comparable field – NDI's Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors. However, this requires a combination of IL&A with both the learning and communications departments of NIMD, and its other major partners in GPMD, such as Demo Finland.

Among NIMD's other international partners that have an impact on the delivery of SPDD is fellow EPD member the Westminster Foundation for Multiparty Democracy, which has been a trustworthy ally and peer, having worked in Benin and Kenya with NIMD in areas relative to research (on the crucial 'cost of politics' studies) and parliamentary support, e.g. legislative strengthening programmes. It is among the closest international partners for both NIMD and Demo Finland.

4.8.3 MoFA and Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN)

The SPDD is one of the 25 strategic partnerships under the MoFA's dialogue and dissent framework, which overall is overseen by DSO. However, given the focus of the SPDD, DSH is the ministry's main central representative, while embassies are key partners at the country level. The evaluation reviews the quality of the partnership with MoFA at both the central (i.e. DSH) and country level (i.e. EKNs), with a particular focus on how these partnerships have evolved since the MTR.

Concerning the quality of cooperation with DSH, the evaluation observes a remarkable change in comparison with the situation in 2018. At that time, the relationship between DSH and NIMD²⁷ was described more as a sub-contract rather than a partnership. Having adopted the partnership from DSO that was then overshadowed by the demise of AWEPA – with few meaningful results being presented – discussions were felt to be dominated by contractual and administrative matters. However, at present the SPDD is described as a programme that naturally fits DSH's policy framework, illustrating an increasing interest and sense of ownership on the part of DSH. DSH furthermore expresses appreciation for the way in which the demise of AWEPA has been dealt with, while both parties

²⁷ AWEPA had already disappeared.

confirm that discussions have become more programmatic and constructive. Nevertheless, scope for further improvement remains by spending less time discussing budgetary or operational details, and more on learnings from success and failure. In line with this, both sides express the need to elevate the dialogue to a strategic level based on better articulated and honoured mutual expectations, making optimal use of clearly defined and mutually recognised complementarities.

Finally, DSH feels that feedback from EKNs is increasingly acted upon. As a result, their perception of the quality of collaboration between the SPDD programme and embassies in programme countries overall has improved, with Uganda and Ethiopia being mentioned as positive examples. At the same time, differences between countries remain partly due to individual interests and attitudes.

Zooming in on the quality of partnerships with Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), increasingly strong cooperation is reported, manifested by regular exchange of information with EKNs, is reported (Ethiopia, Indonesia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe) and including examples where the SPDD partner receives direct funding from the EKN (Georgia) and where the EKN actively engages in programme activities (Myanmar).

Moreover, in countries in Central America – like in most sub-Saharan African countries – the positive reputation of the Netherlands as a non-interventionist, politically impartial country is considered a very positive reputational asset for SPDD country teams. Visits by NIMD's director to EKN and the official openings of certain SPDD activities by ambassadors are considered instrumental in strengthening the local standing of the SPDD country partner/NIMD country office. Further, EKNs work to help NIMD to avoid duplication with other programmes funded by the Netherlands in countries in which the field is already quite crowded, as is the case in Mali. They also support NIMD to strengthen their local alliances, as in Kenya. An effort is made by EKNs to ensure that NIMD's new approach in Africa (PEAs, cost of politics, small bets with new civil society actors, etc.) can find its niche and be complementary to other EKN-supported programmes, such as International IDEA in Kenya.

An outstanding example of strategic collaboration is starting the SPDD programme in Ethiopia. EKN Ethiopia saw an opportunity and initiated supportive involvement with political parties, bringing NIMD on board during a high-level visit of members of leading Ethiopian political parties to the Netherlands. Strong support from EKN and flexibility from NIMD to explore what the partnership could mean, and solidified by the scoping study laid the ground for careful steps – “roasting coffee the Ethiopian way” – to start a new programme in a restrictive political environment. EKN opening doors for NIMD and investments made by NIMD in building trust paid off when political space started opening. At this point, NIMD was ready to move fast – “make espressos” – with programmatic support to emerging electoral and political changes.

Other positive examples were also encountered, whereby the EKN reportedly assisted in strengthening the network of NIMD's partners and helped by stimulating complementarities and avoiding duplication of intervention, but NIMD is also cautioned against losing its uniqueness by shifting too much towards working with civil society (Kenya and Mali).

5 Conclusions

Following an analytical review of findings in combination with the results of the sense-making workshop with NIMD staff, the evaluation presents its conclusions below, starting with an overall conclusion and followed by more specific conclusions for each of the main evaluation criteria.

5.1 Overall conclusion

When reviewing its overall performance, we conclude that the SPDD has provided a unique and relevant contribution to the dialogue and dissent framework. The SPDD is the only programme to have directly worked with political parties and parliaments, which are critical and essential actors in furthering inclusive democratisation processes. The desk review and outcome cases reveal that the SPDD has made small but significant contributions towards more pluriform democratic processes, most notably in the creation and broadening of dialogue mechanisms, while progress towards women's participation has proved the most challenging. The programme has shown resilience in adapting to changing circumstances, which has benefitted its effectiveness in reaching and influencing political actors, going beyond political parties when necessary.

Nevertheless, the complexity of pursuing changes in political systems and behaviour in multiple countries demands modesty in the speed and scale of change, and makes it impossible to answer the question of whether the SPDD has made 'enough' progress. Besides, the sustainability of the SPDD results remains vulnerable and subject to the (changing) will of political actors. Changing the will of political actors takes a long-term, consistent and repetitive exposure to democratic norms and values, whereby the democracy schools have demonstrated to be a relevant and valuable SPDD intervention.

The efficiency of programme management has been reasonable and stable, with a good balance in maintaining financial accountability and respecting the autonomy of partners. Finally, the programme has increasingly invested in learning, resulting in a range of learning effects in terms of improved management and implementation practices at both the central and country level, although the learning function lacks the necessary structure and recognition to be perceived positively by NIMD's own staff.

5.2 Effectiveness at the country level

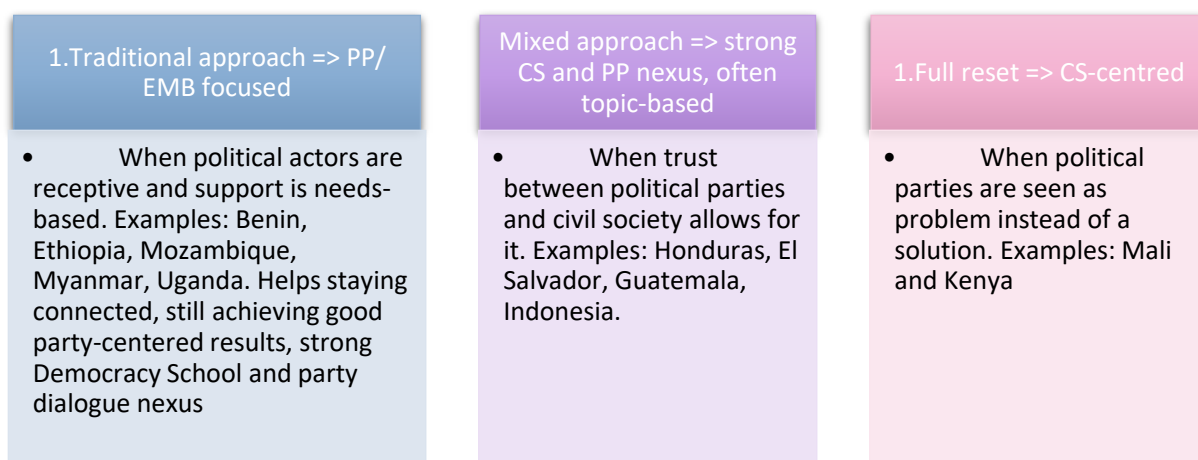
The evaluation team observes that annual plans are often only partly implemented, due to the regular practice of adaptive programming, whereby country partners are given – and have taken – the liberty to revise activities in response to changing circumstances and needs. **Judging SPDD programme effectiveness purely in terms of delivering on intended results (i.e. planned outputs) would lead to a critical assessment, which would not do justice to the nature of the programme.** By contrast, interventions that have deliberately been adapted to fit the political momentum or respond to an emerging need appear to be the most successful in delivering meaningful results on the road towards SPDD programme outcomes. It is generally understood among programme staff that the programme needs to provide space to make such adaptations, even though this is not a formal principle nor is it equally apparent at the level of specificity of country plans.

An important example of such an adaptation relates to SPDD programme’s efforts to include civil society actors in efforts towards more inclusive political dialogue, i.e. not exclusively targeting political parties and parliaments. This adaptation is mainly practised to unlock and re-start multi-party dialogue in situations where progress by working exclusively through conventional political actors becomes stalled. Although this practice has achieved varying levels of success, the evaluation considers this a **logical and positive display of adaptive programming**. At the same time, NIMD demonstrates an awareness that working with civil society must be done with care, as it may pose a risk to its perceived uniqueness.

In terms of progress towards the system-, actor-, and culture-level (i.e. outcome) change, the variety in nature and success among country programmes is apparent. **Clear progress is observed in terms of the scope and quality of multi-party dialogue in the majority of the 14 programme countries**, be it in different shapes and at different levels (national or sub-national). Political deadlock or turmoil in countries like Kenya, Benin and Zimbabwe has interrupted progress, although the SPDD programme has still managed to make headway, albeit to a lesser extent less than hoped for. Another important area of successful system-level improvement in about half of the programme countries is in **electoral reforms**. This progress again is manifested in various ways, ranging from strengthened EMBs to adapting a quota for women and minorities.

Similarly, **the nature and pace of progress in actor-level change substantially differ from country to country, largely determined by the openness and responsiveness of political actors to capacity development interventions**. Here, the evaluation team again observes clear signs of adaptive programming, whereby capacity development approaches can be distinguished by their target actors (i.e. single party, multiple parties, EMB, parliament, and through democracy schools). For each approach, tangible results can be observed, including system improvements, joint resolutions, and improved knowledge and skills to engage in inclusive dialogue. From this, we cannot conclude that one approach is better than another, but rather that the responsiveness and status of political parties is key in determining the best-fitting capacity development approach (see Figure 4, repated from the Chapter 4.1.2).

Figure 7 from Chapter 4.1.2 Approaches to capacity development and trust-building



Cultural-level change is mostly intangible in its nature. Nevertheless, the evaluation observed **significant signs of progress in practising constructive dialogue to overcome political disagreements** as a better alternative to a more confrontational/polarised dialogue. Such signs are most convincingly present in Guatemala, Honduras, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Uganda, and to a lesser degree in Benin, Kenya, and Mali, with SPDD programme partners stimulating this process by demonstrating impartiality and relevant thematic know-how. Another sign of progress was found in **the improved dialogue between political actors and civil society representatives**, at both the national and sub-national level. The active inclusion of civic education as part of SPDD programme activities – in particular in some democracy schools – has been instrumental in this, especially where it allowed for longer-term and repetitive exposure to democratic norms and values. Another successful strategy in this regard has been the inclusion of civil society representatives into political dialogue, which has helped in unlocking stalled political dialogue processes.

A final observation relates to the apparent difference in the motivation of ‘side-lined’ versus ‘parties in power’ to engage in SPDD programme interventions, with the former being more responsive than the latter. SPDD programme staff have acknowledged such a difference but have not (yet) translated this insight into tailored strategies or approaches to respond to these different realities.

We observe that making **headway towards broader participation of women in politics has been more challenging**, although this is not for the lack of trying. As a result, here the nature and pace of progress also vary, especially relating to the extent to which the participation of women in politics is treated as a side or a core issue. In turn, this is largely caused by different levels of confidence and competence in addressing gender inequality among NIMD programme staff and country partners. Besides, although seven out of the fourteen programme countries have established quotas for women in parliament, this is not (yet) a guarantee that these quotas are respected. This confirms NIMD’s conceptual thinking that system change alone is insufficient and that it needs to be complemented by active efforts towards changed practices, i.e. actor and culture. Examples in this respect are also found in several countries, be it to a lesser extent and in a less widespread way, but leading to important insights like the importance of the ‘cost of politics’ in the decision of women to engage in politics.

The evaluation team observes **significant SPDD contributions in most cases that can be small but instrumental**. These contributions most frequently take the shape of providing timely and capable technical assistance, resources, and facilitation services. This combination of inputs helps to establish the programme as a trustworthy and relevant partner, which is crucial for the willingness of targeted political actors to engage with it. At the same time, it is apparent that the effectiveness of SPDD programme contributions is helped by its ability to remain demand-driven, identifying and using windows of opportunities, and gaining endorsement from high-level officials/party leaders.

5.3 Effectiveness of international L&A

The SPDD programme’s **IL&A efforts have been effective in giving more prominence to the political dimension of international development actors, most notably at the EU**. The partnership with EPD has been instrumental in this, whereby the SPDD programme has provided the initial inspiration and impulse as well as financial support to (research-based) L&A campaigns of EPD. The internal capacity of EPD has been of crucial importance, likewise the support of like-minded organisations, resulting in a successful influence on the EU mindset on lobbied topics. The SPDD programme has been less

effective in making progress for this purpose at the UN level or with regional bodies (ECOWAS), with fewer efforts being made than originally planned.

Another IL&A ambition under the SPDD programme relates to **creating a link between country-level and IL&A efforts. Advancement towards this ambition has been limited**, partly due to the relatively few resources dedicated to it, with country programmes and IL&A work operating largely in separation. The complexity of combining the IL&A and country-level efforts is easily understood given that each deals with an entirely different institutional setting, while the global-to-local linkages within those institutions largely lie outside of SPDD's sphere of influence. In particular, **NIMD's concept of shrinking democratic space** (not to be confused with shrinking *civic* space) is a useful re-framing that could help country teams in their programming efforts. However, despite the IL&A success, it is insufficiently mainstreamed across SPDD country partners. Notwithstanding these difficulties, two positive cases of successful 'global-to-local' connections have been found (Ethiopia and Honduras), illustrating the challenging but not impossible nature of making progress on this front.

The **contribution cases related to the SPDD programme's IL&A efforts confirm the complexity of the context in which these take place** (many actors, multiple interests). The cases also demonstrate that the significance of programme as a key contributor is quite limited with the variety of actors present, except for the above-mentioned EPD cooperation. Moreover, the success of IL&A efforts depends on approaches that are evidently different from those at the country level. The need to operate in broad alliances (rather than as a unique impartial entity) and the ability to identify and gain access to the key events of others (rather than organising one's own events or mechanisms) have become key to fruitful IL&A.

5.4 Validity of the theory of change

The **conceptual logic of pursuing S-A-C-level change in combination remains valid for lasting progress towards multi-party democracy**. When presented as interrelated dimensions, the S-A-C model serves the purpose of clarifying the nature of change that the NIMD is striving for, among others through the SPDD programme. Nonetheless, this model is less suitable for planning and reporting purposes, as it is difficult to categorise specific activities and results in line with only one of these dimensions. NIMD's efforts to introduce actor-based pathways as an operational management tool is seen as a step forward, also illustrating that both system- and culture-level change are pursued through actors as a rule.

We see a **positive trend towards the use of a more universal PEA approach**, which would help to ground country-level ToCs solidly into a systematic analysis of the political landscape. However, this has not yet become common practice, which is partly explained by the perception of these tools being time-consuming and at times of limited relevance.

The practice of adaptive programming illustrates that **in climates of low trust and large power imbalances among political parties, a broader group of political actors may need to be targeted** whereby in particular civil society becomes more directly engaged in the programme. This practice recognisably carries the risk of affecting NIMD's unique role and position in democratisation efforts, as there are many other NGOs that have been working directly with civil society for decades. The contribution cases furthermore show that the various types of SPDD interventions in combination with

the NIMD partners' reputation are instrumental in making a significant contribution towards desired outcomes. Accordingly, it is difficult to single out a particular type of intervention as more or less helpful, whereas the ability to undertake a context-sensitive combination of interventions is the key to success.

Finally, the evaluation team concludes that **key assumptions underlying the system dimension of the ToC** (i.e. bringing parties together leads to change rules and regulations, which leads to enlargement of political space) are too stretched in time to be tested. At the actor level, the assumption that political parties can absorb capacity development only appears to hold under certain conditions, with the maturity and power position of a party reflecting a key aspect. At the culture level, the assumption that exposure to democratic norms and values changes attitudes and behaviours seems to hold, but mostly when such exposure takes place within an unchanging group over a longer period, like enrollees and alumni events that bring the same group together at regular intervals. Political endorsement by senior officials/party leaders and careful timing are conditions that are likely to facilitate this progress.

5.5 Financial efficiency

In terms of financial efficiency, the overall budget depletion rate has improved over time, while measures are in place to mitigate the risk of 'spending for the sake of spending'. Nevertheless, there are substantial differences in countries, partly due to unforeseen circumstances, and partly due to inaccurate budgeting, which remains a challenge, in line with the nature of the programme. Overall, **expenditures per cost category have remained relatively stable, with direct programme expenditures ranging between 75 and 80 per cent of total costs in the 2017-2019 period, which illustrates reasonable and stable efficiency.** Moreover, cost-conscious financial management is observed in ongoing efforts to harmonise costs between countries, among others by using external standards to set salary scales. These efforts take place in a continuing balancing act of NIMD with the need to maintain control to be accountable and the need to allow freedom and autonomy for rapid adaptive programming to its country partners.

5.6 Sustainability

The need for sustainable change is embedded in NIMD's multi-dimensional ToC, which at the same time implies the need for long-term involvement as changing the political culture among a critical mass of political actors takes time. Sustainability is seen to be an important consideration in NIMD's programme management decisions, despite not often being referred to explicitly. Various programmatic adaptations are undertaken following concerns about the programme's ability to obtain lasting results. Besides, examples are seen of results being anchored through country partners, which are supported in becoming more self-reliant organisations, among others through SPDD-based fundraising, and in some cases by helping them transform into formal independent NGOs.

These practices appear rather organic and take place in the absence of a deliberate partner or exit strategy. Accordingly, the evolution of NIMD support up to phase-out/exit processes is unpredictable and differs from partner to partner, without clarity regarding why such differences exist.

NIMD's strategy to increasingly work with its 'own' offices appears to contradict the ambition of achieving sustainable results. However, starting with a dependent country office that is given the

space and support to mature into an independent like-minded organisation over time seems to have worked in Georgia and Mozambique.

In addition to the need for results to be anchored in a local organisation, the SPDD programme experience has brought to light some further sustainability-related conditions, including (1) the need for longer-term and/or repetitive exposure to the value of constructive inclusive policy dialogue, and (2) the active engagement of civil society as a political actor and constant advocate for/reminder of inclusion and accountability.

5.7 Effects of programmatic shocks

The effects of two major programmatic shocks have been examined, namely the demise of AWEPA as a partner in SPDD and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

AWEPA's contribution was primarily foreseen in adding the parliamentary component to the P-P nexus that was to be practised by the SPDD programme in Africa. The demise of AWEPA was therefore a risk to the realisation of this component. In reality, this risk could largely be managed, as several NIMD country partners had prior experience in working with parliament, while in other programme countries former AWEPA staff were absorbed by the SPDD programme. Accordingly, the capacity to deliver on the parliamentary component remained largely intact, while in some cases programme partners even indicated that the demise of AWEPA simplified cooperation and coordination and resulted in efficiency gains. Nevertheless, the prominence of the parliamentary component in planning and reporting seems to be affected. Overall, **the evaluation concludes that the effect of AWEPA's demise on the overall programme results has been limited.** At the same time, the evaluation team recognises that this conclusion should be nuanced, as it attempts to draw a comparison with a hypothetical situation.

In terms of programme expenditures, **the COVID-19 pandemic clearly affected programme implementation in the second quarter of 2020.** Since then, there are various signs of programme adaptation and continuation. In some countries, the programme has been using established communication platforms to keep the authorities accountable for the measures taken against the pandemic. In other countries, the evaluation team observes efforts of making programme activities Covid-proof by localising them or moving them online. This works best when it concerns ongoing workstreams with already-established groups used to digital work methods. Despite these efforts, the evaluation team also encountered various examples of Covid-related programmatic interruptions, particularly concerning high-level events, activities outside the capitals, or those involving more external stakeholders (e.g. funders or other groups of beneficiaries).

In addition, there are clear and understandable concerns about how the pandemic has affected political freedoms. While some signs in this direction have been reported, it exceeds the scope of this evaluation to draw hard conclusions about the scale and nature of such effects.

5.8 Internal learning

The evaluation regards *learning as the extent to which the reflection on current practices and experiences result in improved programme management or implementation practices.* The growing

investments in K&R and M&E over the years illustrate the increasing importance attached to learning under the SPDD programme. Signs of **internal learning from M&E efforts in terms of changed practices or procedures are most obvious in relation to the MTR results**. Follow-up has been tracked and reported, indicating that actions are taken on most MTR recommendations. In addition, there are reported examples of learning, partly attributed to the OH exercises, even though formal sense-making of OH results is yet to take place. Besides, the SPDD programme has a learning agenda that includes different types of learning activities, which are implemented with varying levels of satisfaction and success. Peer reviews receive most appreciation at the country level, while knowledge products/research publications are seen to serve more of a communication and learning purpose for audiences outside of the SPDD programme. The extent to which these learning efforts affect programme management and implementation can often be explained but is rarely documented.

Despite the apparent results and prominence of learning in the SPDD programme, the evaluation team observes a **broad sense of dissatisfaction when it comes to learning in the programme**. This critical stance towards learning is particularly directed to the way in which learning is organised and embedded in the partnership. More specifically, criticism refers to the absence of a shared learning strategy with objectives, limited management steering and a lack of agreed learning processes covering the entire learning loop from demand to use. Most of the learning is inadvertent, i.e. the journey towards functional learning results is not deliberately planned, managed, implemented and reported upon, which makes it difficult to judge the effectiveness of the SPDD programme's learning efforts.

At the same time, the evaluation team observes many adaptations in programme management, both in the Hague and at the country level. **These adaptations mostly reflect learning following organic rather than pre-planned reflections on experiences and are not explicitly captured nor recognised as areas of programmatic learning**. This might partly explain why the evaluation team is less critical about internal learning than the SPDD programme itself.

5.9 Quality of partnerships

Despite the absence of a clear partnership strategy, the **quality of the relationship between NIMD and its country partners is characterised by gradually increasing levels of trust and maturity in cooperation**. Overall, NIMD appears to find a good balance between control and autonomy, even though the partnership modalities are varied in shape and age. Finding this balance is facilitated by country partners operating under mature leadership, increasingly interacting as associates rather than implementers. In addition, the **quality of cooperation benefits from various capacity development efforts in particular related to improved complex-aware programming**. Besides, interaction among partners in reflection weeks or peer review exercises contribute positively to capacity development of the partnership as a whole. As a result, the perceived benefits of a partnership with NIMD extend beyond funding, as it also implies recognition and diplomatic influence given that the partnership includes the MoFA of the Netherlands. **No clear correlation is found between the partnership modality and results**, as the maturity of the partner and the relationship appear to be more important factors for successful cooperation.

The quality of relationships with international partners is of particular importance for the success of NIMD's IL&A efforts. Typical positive examples in this context are EPD, Demo Finland and the

Westminster Foundation (UK). The strength of the partnership with EPD has emerged as a key contributing factor for the results achieved at the EU in Brussel, with the success helped by the like-mindedness of Demo Finland, also a member of EPD. The cooperation with Demo Finland has furthermore been extended to the country level with joint efforts in Myanmar. The Westminster Foundation has proved to be a trustworthy ally and peer in research efforts. The quality of the relationship with GPMD is more difficult to judge, as the organisation is quite young and signs of successful cooperation are less obvious.

The **quality of cooperation with DSH – as a central partner on behalf of MoFA – has shown remarkable improvement since the MTR in 2018**. An increasing sense of partnership is illustrated by DSH considering the SPDD programme as a logical contributor to its own results framework, while discussions have become more programmatic and less contractual. Nevertheless, both sides see scope for further improvement, elevating the partnership to a more strategic level, increasingly articulating and using each other's comparative advantages. The **quality of cooperation with EKNs is still mixed but overall has improved**. Ethiopia and Uganda are most frequently mentioned as positive examples, but the evaluation team also sees signs of growing cooperation in other countries in terms of networking, funding, and facilitating complementarity with other interventions.

6 Recommendations

In response to the conclusions above, while considering the results from the overall sense-making workshop, the evaluation team has formulated a set of seven recommendations. Most recommendations respond to a combination of conclusions related to the different evaluation criteria, as diverse programmatic strengths or challenges can often be covered by one strategic response. The recommendations are therefore not structured according to evaluation criteria – as this would lead to significant overlap – but rather they are presented as an interrelated set starting from the overall vision of the programme and ending with more specific administrative recommendations.

The seven recommendations elaborated below are:

1. Retain a unique vision but adapt the programme framework to facilitate planning and reporting.
2. Institutionalise a comprehensive practice of adaptive programming, including the following:
 - a. Introduce adaptive programme management systems.
 - b. Construct a fitting partnership approach, including a more predictable exit strategy.
 - c. Optimise learning to inform programmatic adaptations.
3. Contribute to IL&A through strong partners and be pragmatic about global-to-country linkages.
4. Strengthen the programme approach towards the participation of women in politics.
5. Act on emerging research areas.
6. Pursue a stronger strategic alliance with DSH/MoFA.
7. Recognise and protect yourself against the risks of leading a subsidised partnership.

1. Retain a unique vision but adapt the programme framework to facilitate planning and reporting.

NIMD's has both a widespread and unique vision. The first part of its vision – fostering "inclusive and transparent democracies" – is shared by many organisations, creating ample opportunities for building alliances. The second part – "stronger political parties" – illustrates the more unique part of its vision, enabling an unequivocal positioning of NIMD within the landscape of actors pursuing pluriform/multi-party democracy. Subsequently, NIMD recognises that this vision requires a combination of S-A-C-level change, which signifies that NIMD pursues a complex yet comprehensive and durable ambition.

The evaluation team feels that this vision remains relevant and communicates well both NIMD's ambition and its (unique) position in pursuit of this ambition. The evaluation team therefore recommends that this vision is consolidated as a starting point for NIMD's programmatic work.

Already during the MTR, it was established that the S-A-C conceptual framework is not easily translated into operational plans, as the three dimensions are too interrelated. To untangle the multiple relations between S-A-C levels, actor-based pathways have been introduced, which requires specifying the targeted political actors and the incremental actor-level changes pursued on the road towards system and culture change.

The evaluation team recommends that NIMD keeps using this logic of planning and monitoring progress towards actor-level change at both the international and country programme levels. Among other advantages, this will grant programme managers freedom in choosing the most **relevant** political actors to be targeted. Besides, it will prompt them to articulate the nature and scale of

behavioural changes they strive to achieve in these actors (= enabling effectiveness and improved efficiency in planning and reporting), which fits the complexity of NIMD's programmes.

Programme relevance and success can furthermore benefit from improved expectations and risk management. The evaluation team therefore recommends a retrospective construction of underlying assumptions at the corporate, programme, and country levels. At the corporate level, NIMD may want to consider assumptions related to the international community continuing to embrace the ideology of multi-party democracy as the preferred political system and the funding opportunities associated with this ideology. At the programme level, assumptions may be formulated related to NIMD's ability 1) to maintain its reputation as an impartial and capable partner in pursuit of multi-party democracy, 2) to successfully support country partners in identifying and using the windows of opportunity, and 3) to ascertain that interventions remain needs-driven. At the country level, assumptions may be formulated related to the partner's reputation as a trustworthy and capable facilitator of political dialogue, its ability to establish and maintain relations with the key actors ("spider in the web" approach), and selecting instruments consistent with the political climate.

2. Institutionalise a comprehensive practice of adaptive programming.

The SPDD adopts a practice of thinking and working politically, referred to here as adaptive programming, for which space is allowed for the individual programme managers to adjust to changing circumstances, which has benefitted the relevance and success of the programme. At the same time, country-level planning processes largely maintain a level of specificity incompatible with fluid local conditions. This may undoubtedly be helpful for budgeting but does not help the efficiency and relevance of planning processes. It conveys the impression that adaptive programming is tolerated as a practice but not agreed as a formal programming principle.

To improve the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of planning processes, the evaluation team recommends a more formal approach, with the institutionalisation of adaptive programming practices. This has direct implications for planning, budgeting and reporting processes, but also bears consequences for future partner relations, and the shaping of the learning function in NIMD's programmes. The evaluation team thus presents a set of interrelated recommendations that we believe are mutually reinforcing, while we also suggest that NIMD engages in a discussion with MFA (DSO as the holder of the subsidy framework, and DSH as the most natural partner) to determine the feasibility of adaptive programming within the context of a future subsidy relation.

2.1 Introduce adaptive programme management systems.

Adaptive programme management implies that adaptations are not the result of ad-hoc practices to adjust to unforeseen circumstances, but rather that circumstances are considered from the outset as unpredictable, requiring constant adaptation of activities to the context. To make this practice a reality, we recommend that a sound PEA is used at the beginning of a programme cycle to formulate desired pathways of change to target the most relevant actors. Subsequently, results-oriented annual plans are formulated, clearly specifying the nature of (behavioural) changes that can realistically be pursued in targeted actors in a given year. Such plans reflect the strategy and the main types of interventions to implement, as well as the ways in which to measure progress towards results, but they are not specific about the nature and number of activities, which instead are determined along the road. Of course, the choices made are accounted for, which is achieved through relatively simple

reporting formats explaining why this was the suitable time for selected key activities to take place. In addition, continue complex-aware monitoring to measure the effects on target actor behaviour.

Similarly, budget lines are more results- than activity-based and therefore less specific, and ideally they include a percentage for institutional funding. This allows for more freedom in the choice of interventions and the use of resources, but again with clear agreements about how they are to be reported and accounted for.

2.2 Construct a fitting partnership approach, including a more predictable exit strategy.

As a basic programmatic principle, applying adaptive programming assumes (faith in) the maturity of country partners to act in both an independent and accountable manner. This (perceived) maturity will differ depending on the partner considered and will evolve into rapport through which both parties have a shared interest in seeing their relationship mature. This evolution could be actively stimulated when discussed openly and transparently; for instance, by using evolving 'levels of freedom for adaptive programming', with current practices as the starting level and the processes described in 2.1 above as an advanced level. In other words, adaptive programming does not have to be immediately applied fully with each country partner but rather should depend on the level of maturity of partnership under consideration.

To ensure that the use of qualities of the partnership evolves in the most effective and efficient way, we recommend developing and applying a partnership evolution strategy up to the phasing-out/exit of financial support. Such a strategy foresees a gradual decline of direct programme contributions to its "maturing" partners, shifting its support towards joint fundraising from other sources in line with the documented success of similar efforts in the past. This would reduce financial dependency and increase the sense of equality within the partnership, with the clear resolution that future cooperation continues beyond the provision of direct funding.

2.3 Optimise learning to inform programmatic adaptations.

NIMD and its partners pursue similar objectives in different contexts, through an approach that requires constant adaptation. Nevertheless, when looking at past experiences, similar challenges can be observed in different contexts at various points in time. While NIMD has gained significant experience and insights into how to rise to those challenges during the SPDD programme (and before it), this has not (yet) found its way into systematised strategies, tools and approaches for the new generation of NIMD (programmes) to pick up. Examples of the challenges faced include dealing with the limited responsiveness of parties in power, securing the endorsement of senior officials/party leaders, creating constructive (funding) relationships with EKNs, identifying and addressing gender inequalities, anticipating windows of opportunity, etc.

This constantly growing body of experience can be put to more systematic use to increase the effectiveness of adaptive programming, as it could ensure that choices are better informed by collective knowledge and do not simply depend on individual insights and preferences. The evaluation team therefore recommends that a learning strategy and consequent practices should be developed to expand NIMD's body of knowledge in support of (its reality of) adaptive programming. Such a strategy includes a joint (annual) structured process for prioritising learning questions/challenges/themes and formulates a fitting knowledge-building and -sharing approach (e.g.

online learning events, communities of practice, peer reviews, research, etc.). It also provides space for innovation and “safe-to-fail” trials. In addition, fostering learning requires clarity on how the progress towards answering prioritised learning questions is captured and documented, but most importantly it is used and appreciated by practitioners at the country and international levels. The setup and implementation of such a learning strategy demand management steering and deliberate facilitation of learning. This facilitation should be aimed at fostering learning and making learning results easily traceable, accessible, and useful, rather than being responsible for the learning itself.

3. Contribute to IL&A through strong partners and be pragmatic about global-to-country linkages.

Given that adaptive programming is also practised in the SPDD’s IL&A efforts, the above recommendations for adaptive programming could also be applied, to the extent that this is not already the case when working through international partners like EPD.

Having said that, the evaluation team observes a clear difference in the SPDD programme’s international L&A versus its country-level approach. At the country level, the programme’s L&A efforts seem to be served by the SPDD partnership taking on a relatively unique and impartial position. This impartiality gives legitimacy and credibility to the events and mechanisms for inclusive political dialogue initiated by the programme itself. At the international level, the context is more complex, involving more actors and interests, and thus making the SPDD programme a relatively small player, in need of alliances with like-minded organisations to gain influence. Successful IL&A efforts are therefore more of a matter of identifying, gaining access and being allowed to contribute to high-level events organised by others than organising one’s own events.

To be more effective in IL&A efforts, the evaluation recommends joining a specific alliance or selecting a specific strong partner, having a successful track record and reputation in lobbying the targeted international entity (EU, UN, ECOWAS, etc.) as a main intervention strategy in this direction (i.e. don’t try it alone). Subsequently, it is recommended to concentrate on NIMD’s comparative strength of contributing country-based experiences that illustrate why and how to deal with political parties in stimulating (sub-)national democratisation processes. This means relying on the IL&A strengths of the reputable partner/coalition to shape and carry out its interventions, contributing as needed and requested.

We furthermore recommend that NIMD should remain rather opportunistic in its global-to-country L&A efforts by ensuring that country partners are aware of and encouraged to use relevant international resolutions or conventions in their country efforts. This implies steering clear of trying to influence the internal devolution processes of international organisations as part of NIMD’s core programmatic activities.

Finally, the evaluation recommends that the SPDD’s varying experiences and tactics between international- and country-level L&A should be better documented and made accessible as guidance for future IL&A programmes. In particular, the promising concept of shrinking *democratic* space (distinct from that of shrinking *civic* space) has emerged from a three-year research effort by NIMD and EPD with six SPDD country teams. It promises to provide an apt framework for programming more suitable interventions in countries that are faced with this phenomenon and should be mainstreamed across programme countries.

4. Strengthen programme approach towards the participation of women in politics.

While progress has been made across SPDD programme countries towards this all-important cross-cutting goal, achievements regarding the gender component often hinge on the country partner's existing commitment and capacity to act in this field, as well as a favourable set of political conditions in the country. For the participation of women in politics to become a more central feature of NIMD activities across the board and in every programme country, we recommend that NIMD develops i) specific/thematic skills development tools (including internal training cycles), supported by ii) toolkits to ensure that gender support is mainstreamed in the work of every country programme.

Another important recommendation is to deliberately strive for deeper and more sustained progress in women's political participation in each programme country so that it can survive politically-minded attempts to reverse it. This can be achieved by i) applying a stronger gender focus on every new PEA exercise, with specific research on barriers to women's participation (e.g. cost of politics), and identifying entry points for action, as well as ii) making NIMD democracy schools the key vehicle for promoting women's participation in every programme country (first by ensuring gender-balanced cohorts), while using every opportunity to also develop *internal* political party training programmes for this purpose, wherever possible.

5. Act on emerging research areas.

In undertaking the evaluation, the team encountered two major issues of strategic importance for multi-party democratisation efforts, which might serve as important research areas to be undertaken in partnership with trusted international partners. The first one relates to strengthening the evidence-based in support of the continued relevance of NIMD's vision. This can be achieved by creating a framework for measuring the impact of (changes in) multi-party democracy. In other words, it is recommended create a tool that can help in deepening insights into whether and how multi-party democracy stimulates a more inclusive society, protects and promotes peace and security, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and works towards fulfilling the development goals of all citizens. Such a tool can help in advocating the continued (financial) support for the strengthening of multi-party democracies, which continues to be threatened by competing priorities and budget cuts in the international agenda.

The second one relates to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on political freedom, and what can be done to protect or regain those freedoms where they have been – or are about to be – lost. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the functioning of democracies has reached such a magnitude that the credibility and relevance of upcoming programmes demand taking these effects into account in PEAs and programme designs in the years to come. Doing this convincingly and considering the scale of this crisis will require dedicated research that many other entities may also want to engage in. Given its vision and experiences under the SPDD, NIMD might be a well-positioned and credible partner in shaping and undertaking such research.

6. Pursue a stronger strategic alliance with DSH/MFA.

The evaluation team observes improvements in the relationship and cooperation between DSH and NIMD. Both sides also express an interest in elevating the relationship to a more strategic level, taking shape in a broader and more structural cooperation beyond merely financing the next programme. The evaluation team recommends acting on this joint interest, starting with a deliberate articulation

and recognition of complementarities, particularly in the IL&A arena. For instance, NIMD may provide evidence-based argumentation concerning why and how to work with political parties. This evidence may be used by DSH in arguing for more and better inclusion of the political dimension in international development agendas, while on behalf of the Netherlands as a member state they may be in a stronger position to push for the devolution of relevant resolutions in international entities.

Having mapped out complementarities more clearly, they can then serve as a basis for formulating initial and regularly updating mutual expectations. This could be helped by drawing up a strategic cooperation framework (e.g. in the shape of an MoU), identifying when, where and how these complementarities are best used, and how parties will keep each other accountable for following up on these intentions.

7. Recognise and protect yourself against the risks of leading a subsidised partnership.

At present, NIMD is developing two new programmes to be financed under a new subsidy framework of the MoFA. In each programme, NIMD intends to take the lead, which implies taking on responsibilities that may be logical but only becomes obvious when things do not go well. As the lead party in the partnership, the NIMD carries full and final responsibility for the work done and funds entrusted to the partnership, as well as the money that is simply passed on to other partners for the implementation of their share. The demise of AWEPA has made this painfully clear, and although this matter has been settled well, it has come at a substantial cost and required an enormous amount of management time and efforts, dominating the partnership's focus for months.

The evaluation team therefore recommends that NIMD should carefully consider the legal and financial implications of taking such a lead position in its future partnerships. Based on its experience, NIMD would engage in a dialogue with its partners to agree on how the risks of disappearing or underperforming (even when outside of their control) can be mitigated. Such arrangements are best documented in a partnership agreement, articulating task distribution, coordination mechanisms, a code of conduct and a risk mitigation strategy. For new partners, NIMD is advised to undertake due diligence exercises that are not always easily combined with efforts to create a new alliance in which mutual trust is a key ingredient for success. However, when it is clear that partnership agreements are made for bad rather than good times, its price will be small and the gains substantial.

