

JUST TALK?

Evaluating five years of political
dialogue 2015 – 2020

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Just talk?

At NIMD, we believe that democracy starts with dialogue. But do we have evidence to support that belief?

This report highlights our successes, failures, and lessons learned about the political dialogues we facilitate. It is built on all the evaluations done by external evaluators between 2015 and 2020.

It shows that our dialogue interventions are not just talk. They contribute directly to improving the quality of democracies around the world.

However, it also shows that making that contribution is difficult, and increasingly so. More repression, more single-party-dominance, and a continued weakening of (opposition) parties have forced us to innovate.

We designed new approaches to be able to continue our work despite the significant backslide in democratic freedoms. We are targeting new actors, developing new dialogue interventions, and, unfortunately, lowering our expectations and harnessing our patience. All to make sure that, in the long run, democracy can still start with dialogue.

Democracy
starts with
dialogue.

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Executive summary

How democracy starts with dialogue

The evaluations show that NIMD's political dialogues significantly contributed to improving democratic behavior and legislation. Over the past five years, they contributed to increased trust and collaboration between political parties and other political actors; to commitments to collaborate; to countering polarization and violence; to recommendations to improve (democratic) legislation; and finally, to new laws and regulations. Yet, they also show we were not always successful.

The successes – and failures – of dialogue interventions are strongly dependent on various factors, some of which are in NIMD's sphere of control, some in NIMD's sphere of influence, and some within NIMD's sphere of concern. Examples of the most influential factors which are under NIMD's control include three of its guiding principles (inclusivity, impartiality, and long-term presence), NIMD's long-standing practice of combining its dialogue interventions with capacity-building interventions, and adaptability and the use of innovative approaches. Factors that strongly affect dialogue processes and which are within NIMD's influence include the strength – or weakness – of political party structures, and intraparty conflict. Finally, a factor within NIMD's concern that has a major influence on dialogue interventions is decreasing democratic space and rule of law. This has led to major adaptations to NIMD's planned dialogue interventions, and in at least one case even to the cancellation of a planned dialogue intervention.

In addition, the analysis highlights how successful dialogue interventions are dependent on a manifold of different activities that go beyond dialogue facilitation itself. In total, over twenty different activities are identified. These can be categorized as activities to build trust between NIMD and its target groups, to build trust between the participations of the dialogue, and to provide logistical, technical, or content support.

Evaluating NIMD's guiding principles

Impartiality, inclusiveness, ownership, flexibility and long-term commitment

The evaluations show that, first, the principle of impartiality remains one of the most important preconditions for NIMD's success in its political dialogue interventions. NIMD's strong reputation as an impartial party allows it to develop dialogue interventions that would be impossible for others who do not work on the basis of this principle, or who lack a similarly strong reputation of impartiality. Also the principles of ownership and flexibility have a strong positive influence on dialogue interventions. In addition, the principle of long-term commitment is also evaluated as a positive contribution. However, it has a particularly positive effect when it enables and strengthens the other four guiding principles. The evaluations are less clear when it comes to the principle of inclusiveness. On the one hand, inclusiveness contributes to a large extent to the success of a political dialogue interventions. Yet, this is only when the principle is understood as inclusion of opposition and ruling parties. The evaluations give very little information on how the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women and youth, influences the process and results of political dialogues.

NIMD's signature dialogue interventions

In response to a significantly decreased democratic space, it is clear from the evaluations that the NIMD network needed to innovate its approach to dialogue over the past five years. While in the early beginnings of the NIMD network the inter-party dialogue platforms were the typical intervention, the network has now moved to five signature dialogue interventions:

- ✦ **Political party dialogue:** in which NIMD or its partners facilitate a safe and often institutionalized space for dialogue between representatives of political parties. This can either be a long-term inter-party dialogue platform, or a short-term thematic political party dialogue. Case studies of this intervention are presented in chapter 5, which include Burundi, Mali, Myanmar, Tunisia, Uganda, and Mozambique.
- ✦ **Political actor dialogue:** in which NIMD or its partners facilitate a safe space for dialogue between representatives of different political institutions. Case studies of this intervention in chapter 5 include Colombia and Zimbabwe.
- ✦ **Multi-stakeholder dialogue:** in which NIMD or partners facilitate a safe space for dialogue between representatives of political and civic organizations, institutions, parties and movements. Case studies of this intervention in chapter 5 include Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, and Mozambique.
- ✦ **Informal dialogue:** in which NIMD or partners facilitate an informal meeting space for political and/or civic actors. Case studies of this intervention in chapter 5 include Myanmar and Tunisia.
- ✦ **Dialogue assistance:** in which NIMD provides technical, logistical, and thematic support and expertise to an ongoing dialogue upon invitation of the organizing body, such as a government or other state institution. Case studies of this intervention in chapter 5 include Ethiopia and Mali.

Main lessons learned

This report concludes with the main lessons learned, which are summarized separately for dialogue practitioners, evaluators, and donors. These include, among others,

- ✦ *For dialogue practitioners:* NIMD's unique emphasis on **trust-building with its target groups** continues to have a very strong positive influence on the results of our dialogue interventions. The role of NIMD and partner staff in that trust-building cannot be overstated, and needs the continued attention, investment, and capacity strengthening.
- ✦ *For dialogue evaluators:* We need to better understand the ways in which NIMD's guiding principle of **inclusivity**, understood as inclusion of marginalized groups in dialogue, influences the results of our dialogue interventions.
- ✦ *For dialogue donors:* When it comes to dialogue, **funding staff time** is as, or even more, important as funding separate dialogue activities. The quality and results of our dialogue work is crucially dependent on the quality of our staff, including their ability to build trust with and between the target groups and their ability to maintain NIMD's principle of impartiality.

1. Introduction

In some ways, this report is a success story. According to our external evaluators, our work between 2015 and 2020 to bring political actors around the table to engage in dialogue has often paid off. Using our signature approach to political dialogue, we were able to contribute successfully to trust-building between political rivals, open doors for political collaboration, support the drafting of legislation, and improve democratic structures. We were able to do this in many countries, such as Tunisia, Myanmar, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Mali, Kenya, Guatemala, Colombia, and Ethiopia.

At the same time, writing this report in 2021 painfully demonstrates success can be short-lived. Some of our dialogue interventions that were judged by the evaluators as highly effective are now postponed or stopped. The slow but sure democratic backslide that we witnessed over the past years has accelerated significantly this past year, while old conflicts have also flared up, often with severe consequences in many countries where we work.

One of the most prominent examples is the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP). Years of trust-building, capacity-building, and dialogue investments had led to a well-running inter-party dialogue platform with promising results. As the evaluators state; “MySoP has made a significant contribution to a safe and institutionalised space that reinforces dialogue, inclusive policy-making and an enabling environment for political parties at the sub-national level in the form of an inter-party dialogue platform in Shan State. A pinnacle of this support has been twelve members of parliament – also members of the inter-party dialogue platform – jointly signing the Shan State Law of Food Safety in Basic Education School bill, which was passed into the law by parliament in February 2020.”¹

Yet, on 1 February 2021, tanks rolled through the streets. Myanmar’s military deposed the democratically elected members of parliament. It proclaimed a state of emergency, and declared power was now vested in their Commander in Chief. New democratic elections were promised, but only in two years’ time. It goes without saying that with the national and regional parliaments dismissed, we can no longer maintain our inter-party dialogue platform.

In the meantime, the country seems caught in a downward spiral of conflict and increasing violence. At the time of writing, over 1100 civilians have been killed and over 8000 people detained.² In response to the coup, the elected lawmakers formed a committee to represent the elected parliament, and a National Unity Government (NUG) on the basis of an interim Federal Democracy Charter. However, at the time of writing both the NUG as well as the military have failed to established full control over the state.

Still, the trust and relations built between the democratically elected members of the MySoP inter-party dialogue platform are maintained, and they are still in contact with each other. Moreover, proving the resilience and commitment of our staff, the Myanmar team has analyzed how we can continue our work, and where we can still make the biggest difference through dialogue. Building on the results from before the coup, a new dialogue programme is currently being developed.

¹ MDF, 2020:6

² Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) <https://aappb.org/>

Such developments highlight how difficult and challenging our line of work is. Yet, we hope that this report also serves as a reminder of what we can achieve as a global network, of the endurance and innovativeness of our teams around the world, and of the difference peaceful dialogue can make.

This report analyzes and discusses all the successes, failures, and lessons learned from external evaluations of our political dialogue work over the period between 2015 and 2020. It is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 explains the data we have used to write this report and the methodology of the analysis.

Chapter 3 delves into creating a better understanding of the results of NIMD's political dialogue interventions. It discusses the evaluated results, the actual activities NIMD deploys in its political dialogue interventions, and outlines the factors that affect the processes and results of its interventions.

Chapter 4 evaluates NIMD's guiding principles, and the extent to which these affect the processes and results of NIMD's dialogue interventions.

Chapter 5 presents NIMD's five signature dialogue interventions, as based on the findings from the evaluations; political party dialogue; political actor dialogue; multi-stakeholder dialogue; informal dialogue; and dialogue assistance. The chapter presents case studies to illustrate each signature dialogue intervention.

Chapter 6 concludes the report by listing the main lessons learned for dialogue practitioners, dialogue evaluators, and dialogue donors. It also suggest questions for future analysis and learning.

2. Data and methodology

This study draws on 12 evaluation reports conducted between 2015 and 2020 that cover political dialogue interventions in 17 NIMD programme countries³, with detailed case evidence drawn from 11 of those: Tunisia, Myanmar, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Mali, Kenya, Guatemala, Colombia, and Ethiopia. This provides a rich basis of evidence from most of the NIMD programme countries within a prolonged programming period. While the evaluations focus on the last five years, it must be noted that in several countries dialogue programming has been ongoing for a much longer period.

The most elaborate evaluation reports are from NIMD's two largest multi-country programmes that have a strong political dialogue component (2016-2020). These are the 'Strategic Partnership Dialogue and Dissent Programme (SPDD): Conducive Environments for Policy-influencing: The role of political parties and parliaments' and the 'Dialogue for Stability Programme (DFS): Inclusive politics in fragile settings'. Both programmes were funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Social Development (DSO) and the Stability and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) departments respectively. For both of these programmes, independent evaluation consultants carried out mid-term (performance) reviews and summative end-evaluations.⁴ For the end evaluation, independent steering committees oversaw the evaluation process, and the evaluation followed quality and independence criteria that had been drawn up by the MFAs Independent Evaluation Agency (IOB).

The mid-term reviews and end evaluations of both grants are the most an extensive and encompassing of all NIMD's evaluations. In general terms, they have used a theory-based evaluation approach, and have relied for data collection on:

- (1) Desk research of programme documentation – including the rich monitoring data generated by the programmes, both quantitative, indicator-based and qualitative with human interest stories and outcome harvests;
- (2) NIMD NL, NIMD country offices and partner interviews, triangulated with interviews of beneficiaries and stakeholders in-country;
- (3) Country case-analysis of selected outcomes, including substantiation of outcomes through triangulation and a contribution analysis for those selected outcomes.

In addition to these mid-term reviews and end evaluations, NIMD initiated a number of country-level Outcome Harvesting evaluations to deepen understanding of change processes and outcome results. Four country programmes were evaluated at mid-term (Colombia, Tunisia, Mozambique and Mali) by Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Goele Scheers.⁵ Subsequently, under supervision of Goele Scheers, Outcome Harvesting evaluations of the Myanmar programme took place in 2019 and of the Kenya multi-party dialogue platform in 2020.⁶

Outcome Harvesting⁷ as an evaluation approach has gained significant popularity in recent years, and is especially useful for evaluating political change processes, and policy influencing

³ Ukraine, Jordan, Benin, El Salvador, Honduras, Indonesia, Tunisia, Myanmar, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Mali, Kenya, Guatemala, Colombia, Ethiopia.

⁴ For SPDD: MDF, 2018; MDF, 2020. For Dfs: Global Partners Governance, 2018; Ecorys, 2021.

⁵ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018.

⁶ Haapanen, van der Jagt, and Scheers, 2019. Van der Jagt and Scheers, 2020.

⁷ For a description of the 6 Outcome Harvesting steps and 9 principles, together with rich reflections and resources, see the core text on Outcome Harvesting: Wilson-Grau, R, 2019, Outcome Harvesting Principles, Steps and Evaluation Applications, IAP, Charlotte, NC.

programmes in complex and dynamic environments. As a utilisation-focused, highly participatory approach it enables evaluators, grant makers, implementing teams and managers to identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes they have influenced when relationships of cause - effect are sometimes not well-known. Unlike some evaluation methods, Outcome Harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes or objectives, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

In addition, NIMDs implementation partner and co-donor to the Tunisia and Myanmar country programme, DEMO Finland, initiated two country-level evaluations with independent consultants that form an additional, deeper set of evaluation findings of two of the programmes in SP and DfS with a very important dialogue component.⁸

Finally, three additional independent evaluations of smaller projects funded by other donors in programme countries covered by SP or DfS were also included in this analysis since they included a strong political dialogue focus. They are the Foundations of Interparty Dialogue project in Burundi funded by the US State Department's Bureau of Conflict and Stability Operations (CSO) and co-implemented by the Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP); the EU-funded Enhanced Support to Democratic Governance in Jordan of which the political parties component was implemented by NIMD Jordan; and the Evaluation of the Zimbabwe Political Parties Dialogue Project, also funded by the EU and co-implemented with the Zimbabwe Institute and the Olof Palme International Center.⁹

The analysis of this report rests on the qualitative study using MAXQDA of the evidence on political dialogue contained in the evaluation reports. Using several coding levels and categories, we analyse enabling and disabling factors for dialogue, types of dialogue and the actors involved, the actual NIMD-supported activities that facilitated these dialogues, and the concrete and specific results of these dialogues in terms of policies adopted, agendas set and reforms for an enabling environment addressed.

For three of the cases, NIMDs external annual reports were drawn on to supply additional illustrative information from human interest stories. This applied to the description of outcomes and contribution in the Uganda inter-party dialogue case of IPOD and the work on new legislation on election campaigning and the POMA (page 27-28, this report); to the description of the results of IMD Mozambique's political actor dialogue for trust-building (page 29 this report); and to the description of outcomes and contribution for the informal dialogue case in Tunisia around the couscous politique (page 38, this report).

⁸ MDF 2021; and: FIANT Consulting Oy, 2021.

⁹ Mauremootoo, 2018; DAI, 2021; and Chitiga et al, 2021.

3. How democracy starts with dialogue

NIMD’s political dialogues significantly contributed to improving democratic behavior and legislation, according to NIMD’s external evaluators. Over the past five years, NIMD’s dialogue interventions led to increased trust and collaboration between political parties and other political actors; to commitments to collaborate,; to countering polarization and violence; to recommendations to improve (democratic) legislation; and finally, to new laws and regulations. Yet, we were not always successful.

This chapter first presents the evaluated results of our dialogue interventions and the actual activities we undertake to get to those results. It also delves a bit deeper and investigates the factors that influence getting to these results.

3.1 Political dialogue results

The evaluators state that the interventions aimed at facilitating political dialogue and inclusive policy development have; “effectively fostered the establishment of relationships between representatives of opposing parties; promoted conflict mediation and dialogue skills; and promoted peaceful conflict resolution methods. In some cases, the facilitated dialogues have led to the formulation of joint policy statements, or the adoption of relevant legislative acts, which contributed to more inclusive policy development.”¹⁰ In summary, the results of our dialogue interventions include;

- ✦ Acquaintance with representatives of other parties
- ✦ Trust-building between representatives of different parties
- ✦ Learning to listen to other perspectives and engaging in debates
- ✦ Learning about the benefits of non-violent dialogue
- ✦ Adoptions of code of conducts
- ✦ Fostering the formulation of joint statements and policies
- ✦ Development of policy documents and research papers for learning purposes
- ✦ Adoptions of relevant legislative acts

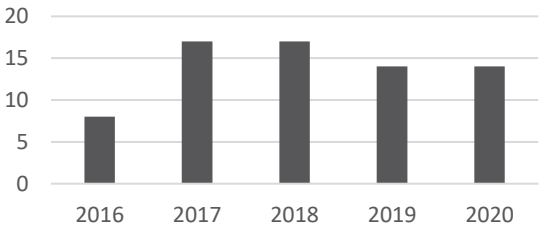


¹⁰Ecorys, 2021; MDF, 2020.

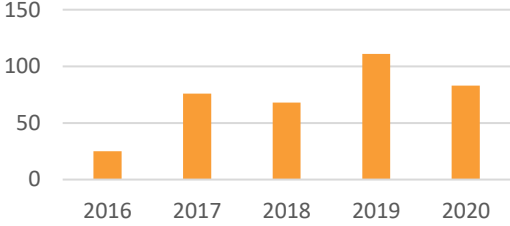
3.2 Political dialogue results in numbers

Over the last five years, we have consistently used the same set of quantitative indicators to measure the main output results of our political dialogue interventions. These numbers are useful at various levels: first, they help show the scope and reach of our programming globally to a wider public. Second, they allow us to report to donors on easily measurable and aggregate indicators for accountability purposes. And third, they provide insight into the quality of the dialogue (i.e. how many parties join, how often do they meet) which in some contexts is a dialogue outcome in itself. Some of these common indicators are shown in the graphs below for the last five years. But because country context is missing to these measurements, and measurement approaches cannot always be constant, they do not tell a complete story.

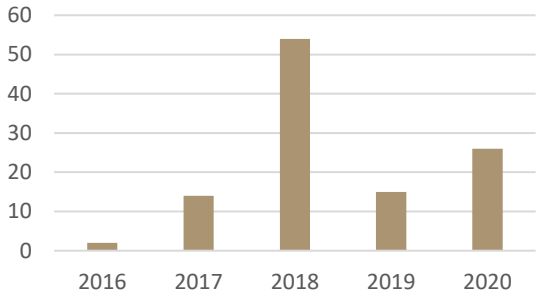
One thing we can see from Figure 1 below is that the number of countries where we have supported political party dialogues has diminished recently. This reflects the NIMD’s network development towards other forms of dialogue interventions. Also notable is Figure 3, which shows the number of proposals that make it to parliament through an inter-party dialogue process, with a considerable peak in 2018. This is somewhat deceiving, as it is attributable to a more detailed counting of smaller proposals. The cases in Chapter 5 put the necessary flesh on the bones to better understand these figures.



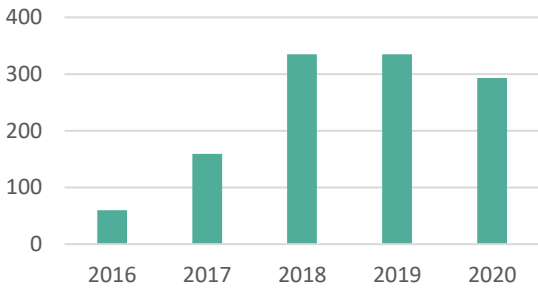
■ 1. Number of countries with inter-party dialogues



■ 2. Number of policy decisions formulated in inter-party dialogues



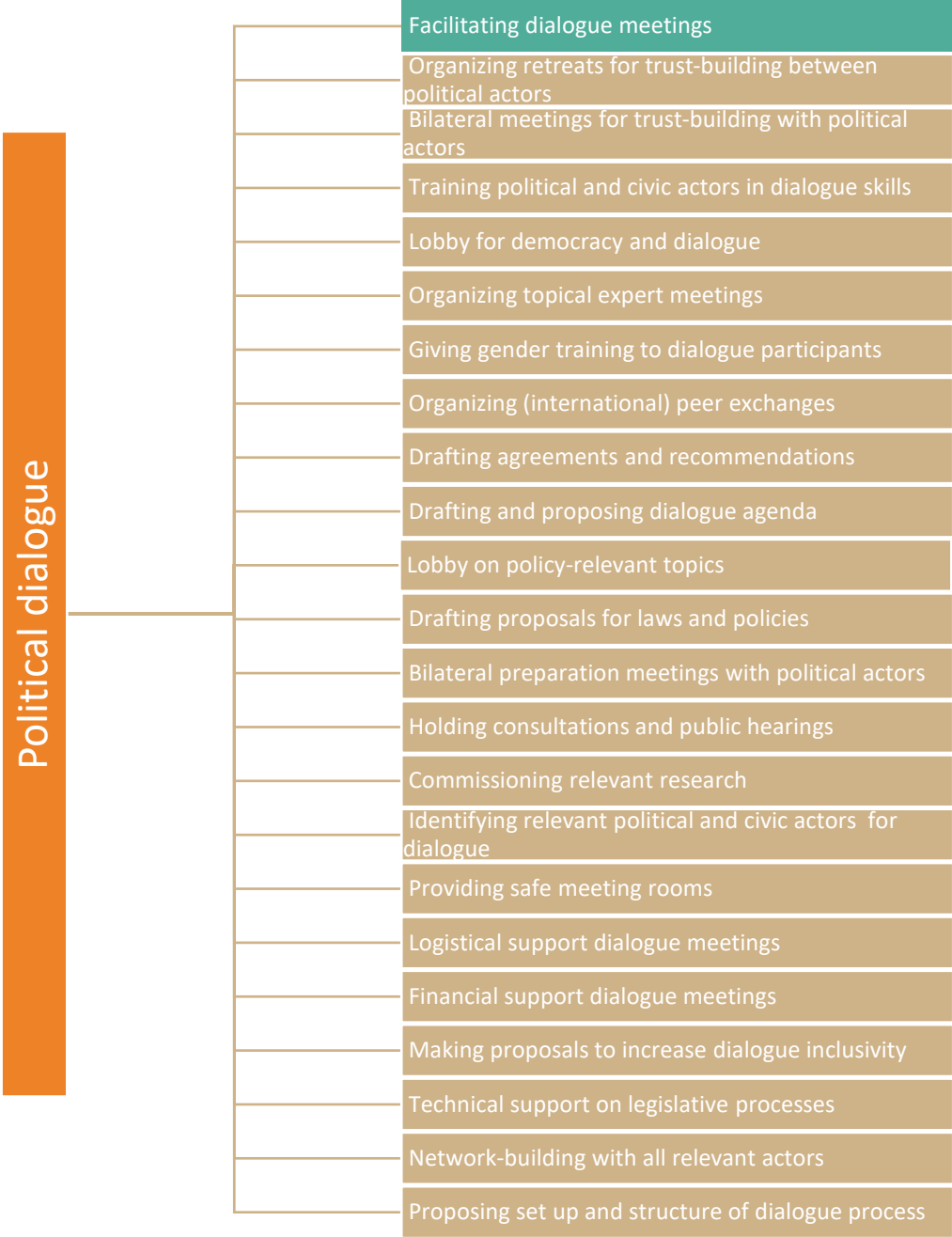
■ 3. Number of proposals submitted to parliament



■ 4. Number of political parties participating in inter-party dialogues

3.3 Actual activities of political dialogue interventions

Getting to results with our dialogue interventions depends on much more than just dialogue facilitation itself. In fact, as the evaluations highlight, NIMD carries out about twenty different activities to make sure the dialogue interventions lead to the results it strives for, next to dialogue facilitation. With “dialogue intervention” we mean a set of dialogue-related activities implemented in a controlled, planned way by NIMD or partner staff, with the aim of creating (positive) changes for the people exposed to the dialogue and those potentially affected by its outcomes. All these activities, as judged by the evaluators and listed below, significantly contribute to the success of a dialogue intervention.¹¹ They aim to first build trust between NIMD and the target groups, then secondly build trust between the dialogue participations themselves, and thirdly, provide logistical, technical, or content support to political dialogues.



¹¹ MDF, 2020; Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018; MDF, 2018.

3.4 Factors of influence

The evaluators found that NIMD’s dialogue interventions can contribute to trust-building between political actors and improvements to democratic systems. However, it is also clear that the successes and failures of the political dialogues are strongly dependent on a wide variety of factors and conditions. Some of these factors lie within NIMD’s sphere of control or influence. These can be used strategically and intentionally to create an enabling environment for the dialogue intervention. The evaluators also found some factors that are often beyond NIMD’s direct reach, but that are within its sphere of concern. These factors –and whether they fall within NIMD’s sphere of control, influence, or concern – are summarized in the figure below. The most prominent of these factors are elaborated on further in this paragraph.

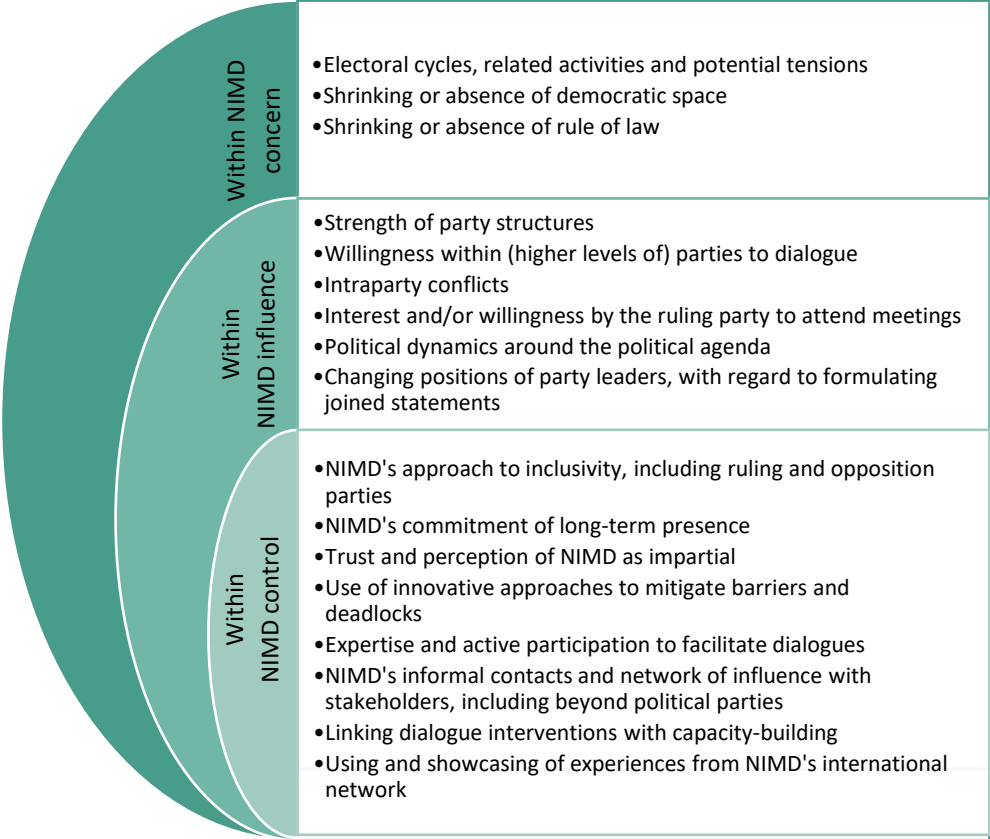


Figure 1 Factors of influence in NIMD's control, influence, and concern

Within NIMD control: Inclusivity, long-term presence and impartiality

Three of the factors identified by the evaluators as highly influential to the success, or failure, of a political dialogue are in fact three of NIMD’s guiding principles. These are inclusivity, meaning here the inclusion of ruling and opposition parties, NIMD’s commitment to long-term presence, and the principle of impartiality. This solidifies NIMD’s own understanding of the importance of these principles for its dialogue successes. The way these three factors influence NIMD’s political dialogue work is further discussed in the following Chapter 4.

Within NIMD control: Linking dialogue with capacity-building

One factor within NIMD’s control which merits further elaboration is the linking of political dialogue interventions with capacity-building interventions. While it is not an NIMD guiding principle, it is standard practice in most NIMD’s dialogue work. This capacity-building can take place in Democracy

Schools, in which politicians from all parties are trained in political and democratic skills together. In addition, NIMD also provides separate capacity-building trajectories and peer-to-peer learning exchanges for parties and political actors. According to the evaluation, such capacity-building interventions strengthen the dialogue interventions in several ways.

First, it allows staff to start building trust with the target groups; “Changes in motivation [to join the dialogue] 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.”¹² For example, in Colombia, “in 2015, NIMD signed an Agreement of Understanding with the [opposition party] Centro Democrático and has carried out different organizational strengthening activities with the party, through which NIMD gained their trust. Therefore, when in 2016 the party was invited to participate in the [political party] dialogue scenarios, it attended.”¹³

In addition, and on the coupling of political dialogues with Democracy Schools specifically; NIMD’s “pioneering dialogue platforms and fostering [political party] dialogue in environments that are complex and sensitive builds in considerable ways on what NIMD and partners have been able to achieve through the Democracy Schools. The experience and track record of the Schools have helped NIMD and partners to establish themselves as credible and trusted actors across the political spectrum, and that has given them considerable convening power.”¹⁴

Second, the linking of capacity-building with dialogue allows the target groups to start to engage with each other as well. This can have a positive effect on the dialogue process itself. For example, “In 2020, [NIMD’s partner] the Zimbabwe Institute (ZI) facilitated training on dialogue and mediation for the three political parties in Parliament. The parties identified and articulated different visions for the country. Although the visions were focusing on different aspects, the economy and politics, the linkages and common interests that were drawn from the three parties provided the insights valued by the parties. ZI was able to identify points of convergence and entry points into potential issues that could be useful to deadlock breaking. [The exercise] was important for the parties to realise their positions vis a vis the status of dialogue in the country. The parties identified and discussed what they needed to do to re-engage at the [inter-party dialogue platform]”.¹⁵

Third, and consequently, linking capacity-building with dialogue also supports reaching significant results in the dialogue itself, especially as it works effectively as an incentive and entry point to engage high-level party leadership.¹⁶ For example, in 2018 also in Zimbabwe, the political parties involved in the dialogue together passed important amendments to the Electoral Act in parliament. According to the evaluators, this result “demonstrated the strength and unity of purpose and consensus-building, born through intense capacity building, exposures to learning experiences and technical support by the Zimbabwe Institute.”¹⁷

In this way, this one factor that lies within NIMD’s sphere of control can have a strong positive affect on several factors that are beyond NIMD’s direct control, but are in its sphere of influence, including (i) the strength of party structures, (ii) willingness within (higher levels of) parties to engage in dialogue, (iii) interest and/or willingness by the ruling party to attend dialogue meetings.

¹²MDF, 2020:32.

¹³ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018: Annex 1.

¹⁴ Global Partners Governance, 2018: Annex 4.

¹⁵ Chitiga, et al, 2021: 19.

¹⁶ MDF, 2018: Annex 4.

¹⁷ Chitiga, et al, 2021: 18.

Within NIMD control: Adaptability and innovative approaches

Another factor of influence that lies within NIMD's control is adaptability and the subsequent use of innovative approaches to mitigate barriers and deadlock. According to the evaluations, this is a factor that can strongly affect whether an intervention will become a success, or whether it becomes stuck. When NIMD demonstrated adaptability and used new approaches, it was able to get to results even if the political contexts became more strained.

Yet, the opposite is also true. In some cases, NIMD's lack of adaptation and innovative approaches in a dialogue intervention have contributed to the lack of success of the dialogue. For example, as is stated about the inter-party dialogue platform in Mali; "the impact of the political dialogue has been limited due to the insufficient level of commitment of the main political actors, but also to the lack of an innovative methodology to that end."¹⁸ In 2018, the evaluators urged NIMD to make the most of the incentives in the political context, especially when an ongoing dialogue intervention becomes stuck; "By not making use of incentives, [NIMD] is missing out on opportunities where the usual means may not be effective."¹⁹ In short, while political willingness or a strained political context can significantly disrupt a dialogue intervention, it is also up to NIMD to come up with new approaches and innovations to solve - or at least bypass - such issues.

Within NIMD influence: Strength of parties

From the list of factors within NIMD's influence as listed in Figure 1 above, one which significantly affects the process and outcome of political dialogues is the strength of the parties. As is clear from the above, NIMD often combines dialogue interventions with capacity-building. Next to the various benefits as described earlier, creating a more level playing field between the political parties in the dialogue is an important reason for this linking. However, this does not succeed in all contexts. In the cases where political parties remain weak, despite capacity-building interventions, it affects the dialogue negatively in several ways.

First, when working with weak parties, it becomes difficult to integrate agreements made and lessons learned during the dialogue into the political parties. For example, in Zimbabwe, "respondents from political parties reported a lack of internal party feedback systems to cascade information learnt from workshops [into the party structures], and participation in dialogue platforms becoming personalized."²⁰ This personalization, as opposed to institutionalization, can have a negative effect on the results of a dialogue. A lack of strong feedback mechanisms in a party can mean that agreements made by party representatives in the dialogue are not automatically honoured by the party at large.

Second, the dialogue process is less likely to result in the desired outcomes when one or two parties remain notably stronger and the others remain very weak, despite the linked capacity-building interventions for each party. In this way, there is no level political playing field, and NIMD's principle of inclusiveness is not always sufficient to lift that disadvantage. In fact, in the worst case scenario, the dialogue intervention itself is in danger of becoming a victim in that unequal power play. For example, in Kenya, "the small parties [that are members of the inter-party dialogue platform] have weak structures, lack of funding, and are dominated by their male founding members who are also party leaders. [...] The Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) [a political initiative to amend the constitution] has contributed to the weakening of political parties. There is no meaningful political opposition. The strong leadership by President Kenyatta and Mr. Odinga has in effect silenced political opposition. Political parties have been rendered unable to play their role in promoting democracy in the country

¹⁸MDF, 2020:Annex 3.

¹⁹MDF, 2018:84.

²⁰ Chitiga et al, 2021: 18.

as many parties compete over their loyalty or support to the BBI process and its co-principals. [The inter-party dialogue platform] CMD-K has been forced to align itself to the BBI process.”²¹

This dynamic, with its negative effect on political dialogue interventions, is even stronger in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), including Colombia and Burundi; “political parties in FCAS face far greater challenges than their counterparts in peaceful countries due to the way power is distributed in countries that have recently experienced conflict. Political settlements in FCAS are usually characterised by a ruling party attempting to consolidate and retain power at all cost. As a result, ruling parties are disincentivised to allow support to strengthen their [opponents] lest this loosen their grip on power. [...] As such, non-ruling parties in FCAS have little support and are often shut out from being able to participate in the political space, even when the country is ostensibly democratic. This dynamic is often further exacerbated by the integration of former armed movements (as is the case in Burundi and Colombia) which are or have recently been party to the conflict. Years of war and fighting make it difficult for ex-combatants to be in close proximity to one another, and almost impossible to engage in productive [political party] dialogue.”²²

Within NIMD influence: Intraparty conflict

Another factor which can significantly affect the dialogue process and outcome is intraparty conflict. As a result of such conflicts, parties can become inward looking and preoccupied with the dynamics surrounding their internal conflict. Therefore, they usually have much less focus on national issues and dialogue with other parties.²³ Experience shows that such intraparty conflict can even be created by the idea of engaging in a political party dialogue. Especially for parties that used to be an armed movement it can be a challenge to create a shared common vision on opening up to parties that do not have such an armed background in a political dialogue. As a factor within NIMD’s influence, NIMD can try to mitigate or decrease the conflict in the party. However, when that is not successful, it can become more difficult to build trust between parties and maintain a constructive dialogue.

For example, according to the political party representatives in Zimbabwe which were interviewed for the evaluations; “intraparty conflicts resulted in suspicions, which resulted in fear and constrained participation in interparty activities. Where parties had split, new personalities came in who had to bond with the other participating members. In some cases, they rejected what their predecessors had agreed to. For instance, the intraparty conflicts in MDC led to recalling of leaders in parliament, further fueling tensions and affecting continuity of the dialogue process. [In addition], there were intra party political tensions over the leadership renewal processes which also affected progress of the dialogue process.”²⁴

Within NIMD concern: Decreasing democratic space and rule of law

Decreasing democratic space had a highly significant and negative effect on the proceedings of NIMD’s dialogue interventions. While NIMD generally strives to increase – or at a minimum maintain – the democratic space in the countries it operates in, in some cases the repression proved too great. In those instances, the decreasing space led to the need to adjust initially planned dialogue interventions, or to take a completely different route.

One example where considerable adjustments were necessary is Burundi. There, “project objectives were not fully achieved, mainly due to factors outside of the project’s control”. According to the evaluators in 2018, these factors included the government’s decisions to suspend parties and restrict party activities, to cancel the activities related to the dialogue interventions, such as dialogue meetings, training workshops, lobbying meetings, and focus group discussions, and to restrict activities

²¹ MDF, 2020:Annex 3.

²²Global Partners Governance, 2018:279-280.

²³ Chitiga et al, 2021:13.

²⁴ Chitiga et al, 2021:13, 14.

that involved international actors. These factors led to “a failure to realize project assumptions as outlined in the project’s original Theory of Change. None of the following original assumptions came close to being realized:

1. Government lends its prior support and consent to activities
2. Political parties are willing to participate in dialogue processes
3. Substantive and controversial issues are addressed in the dialogue
4. Political parties accept [NIMD’s partner] BLTP as facilitator of inter-party dialogue processes
5. Willingness of political parties to put newly acquired capacities into practice
6. Availability of resources within political parties to apply newly acquired capacities.”²⁵

At the same time, the team’s ability to adapt to these circumstances and innovate their dialogue work proved very successful. By deciding to break with their initial plans to work at the national level, and by finding some space to operate at the provincial level, they were still able to continue their work; “the political crisis which broke out in 2015 continues to detrimentally affect NIMD and BLTP’s intervention plans. Despite the increasingly challenging environment, NIMD and BLTP were able to successfully navigate the political context and continue regular [political party] dialogue meetings involving the main political parties in Burundi. Although they were only able to facilitate the dialogue platforms at the provincial level (not at the national level), the fact they are still operating at all is a significant achievement.²⁶ Their continued engagement with those members of the ruling party who still welcomed political dialogue contributed to that achievement.

One example in which a completely different route became necessary, due to severe limitations to the democratic space, is Jordan. While a dialogue intervention was initially planned, this became impossible due to decreasing democratic space. As stated in the evaluation: “Initially, according to the interviewed Jordan Country Manager, the Democracy School’s programme included opportunities to engage intellectually with political party leaders and to hold dialogue sessions. As a result of increasing resistance from the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (MOPPA) towards directly approaching political parties, the programme shifted from fostering interaction with and within parties, to solely focusing on training women and youth as part of the School of Politics.”²⁷

²⁵ Mauremootoo, John, 2018: ix.

²⁶ Global Partners Governance, 2018: executive summary.

²⁷ Ecorys, 2021:29.

4. Evaluating NIMD's dialogue principles

NIMD builds its interventions on five principles; impartiality, local ownership, inclusiveness, flexibility, and long-term commitment. Yet, to what extent do these contribute to the success of NIMD's political dialogues?

4.1 Impartiality

Our approach is value-based and non-partisan. We are not affiliated with one specific political denomination and we work with political actors from across the spectrum.

Of all NIMD principles, the importance of impartiality is the one most mentioned by the evaluators. It is considered a principle that is crucial for the dialogues' success. The principle, and in particular the subsequent reputation it fosters, positively influences NIMD's dialogue work in several ways. For example, it makes it easier for NIMD and its partners to have ongoing consultations and communication with all the participants of a (potential) dialogue. This contributes significantly to the success of a dialogue, as it allows NIMD to keep track of the developments among and within political parties that could become opportunities or spoilers in the dialogue process.²⁸ Also, it creates opportunities to build trust with political actors and other important target groups. Moreover, it leads to (new) invitations from governments or political parties to support and facilitate dialogues.²⁹ In fact, evaluators conclude that "there appears to be a clear difference" between what an NIMD office or reputed partner closely associated with NIMD can do in comparison "with a more remote or less reputable partner."³⁰

One example is NIMD's partner in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Institute (ZI). After the 2013 elections, there was no formal platform for dialogue, and ZI sought and succeeded to create a stable interparty dialogue platform. According to the evaluators, "Though there were other players, including the POLAD platform, the NPRC and the Heads of Christian Denomination (HoCD), ZI was the only dialogue platform that managed to bring [the ruling and the opposition parties] to engage. ZI was accepted and trusted by the main political parties to be an impartial facilitator of dialogue."³¹

Another example is Ethiopia. By December 2017, NIMD's impartial reputation and trust-building paved the way for NIMD to be involved in an evaluation of the dialogue process between the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the political parties. By the time the Prime Minister convened representatives of political parties to resume the dialogue platform on the theme of national consensus in July, NIMD had gained a solid reputation as an impartial partner with relevant expertise. Therefore, he invited NIMD to support the dialogue. This example is further elaborated on in the case study on Ethiopia in Chapter 5, page 40-41.

The importance of being perceived as impartial extends beyond the NIMD name directly to its staff. Even more so, the character and skills of staff members crucially determine whether or not NIMD or its partner is considered impartial, and consequently, determines the success of the dialogue. These skills include silent diplomacy, the willingness to stay in the background, and to give the credits of one's

²⁸ Mauremootoo, 2018.

²⁹ MDF, 2020; MDF, 2021.

³⁰ MDF, 2018.

³¹ Chitiga et al., 2021:10.

achievements and results to others, such as the political leaders involved in the dialogue.³² In short, it is NIMD's staff that makes or breaks the principle of impartiality, and with that the dialogue results.

For example, in Burundi, the Executive Director of partner Burundi Leadership Training Programme (BLTP) Fabien Nsengimana has been instrumental in keeping the inter-party dialogue platform going in very adverse contexts after the 2015 crisis. The evaluators noted that there was a "willingness for political actors to involve a NIMD/BLTP as neutral party who can track developments among important political actors in terms of interparty dialogue at the domestic level. [This has been] made possible ... as part of longstanding communications and consultations with key government officers. Personal factors have played a very important role in facilitating NIMD and BLTP's involvement in high level gatherings. The role of the BLTP coordinator ... has been crucial in this regard."³³ This example is further elaborated on in the case study on Burundi in Chapter 5, page 26.

4.2 Ownership

We operate as an equal global network. Our programmes are locally set and reflect local demands.

The decision-making power on and ownership of the dialogue interventions lies with our teams around the world. According to the evaluators, ownership and embeddedness adds to the quality of the dialogue intervention; "NIMD country offices and partners are well embedded in the local context. This has emerged as an important facilitator, in particular with regard to implementing more 'sensitive' work."³⁴

Moreover, ownership of the dialogue process by the target groups also has a considerable positive effect on reaching legislative changes through dialogue. The Myanmar inter-party dialogue platform in Shan State is an example of such results. The Shan State Law of Food Safety in Basic Education School is the first pioneering legislative initiative developed by twelve parliamentary parties together, all members of the inter-party dialogue platform, for Shan State parliament. The bill is a joint effort by all parties, demonstrated by their cooperation in the development and lobbying for the bill, and the joint learning on the legislative process taking place. These are new experiences in Shan State, a conflict-ridden state where there is a great deal of distrust among various actors (parties, civil society, government, military, ethnic armed organisations), as the case study on Myanmar in Chapter 5, page 28 further explains.³⁵

4.3 Inclusiveness

We provide a platform for both ruling and opposition parties. All parties take part in the dialogue with an equal voice. In addition, NIMD strives to give marginalized groups a seat at the table and champions the cause of gender equality.

Inclusiveness, understood as including ruling and opposition parties, has a considerable influence on the success of the dialogue interventions. According to the evaluations, it contributes to mitigating ongoing political conflicts and building a democratic culture. The fact that both ruling and opposition parties have an equal voice at the dialogue table also supports collaboration between the party representatives at the table.³⁶ In addition, it contributes to NIMD's reputation of an impartial third

³² MDF, 2018; Mauremootoo, 2018.

³³ Mauremootoo, 2018: viii.

³⁴ MDF, 2018; Ecorys, 2021:48.

³⁵ MDF, 2021.

³⁶ Van der Jagt and Scheers, 2020; FIANT Consulting Oy, 2021; MDF, 2018: Annex 4; MDF, 2021; Ecorys, 2021.

party.³⁷ For example, in Uganda’s Inter Party Organization for Dialogue (IPOD), for which NIMD Uganda acts as the Secretariat, the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) and the other parliamentary parties, including the main opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), participate on equal footing. This meant that the platform was viewed as relevant by most parties, and that substantive progress on review of the Public Order Management Act (POMA) could be made together. This is further explained in the case study on Uganda in Chapter 5, page 27-28.

However, this same example on the POMA demonstrates that the principle of inclusivity does not make the dialogue immune to ongoing political dynamics. In particular, the evaluations show that in contexts where there is one strong and dominating governing party, the dialogue suffers from that uneven political playing field. That is to say, even if all parties have an equal voice at the table according to the principle of inclusivity, most major political parties will continue to exert their “quasi monopoly of power” – both at and away from the dialogue table.³⁸ In such contexts, NIMD’s dialogue interventions sometimes have fewer results than initially strived for.³⁹ This was also the case for the final result of IPOD’s work on POMA, on which the ruling party NRM had much influence. Eventually, the POMA was deferred by the President (also Chairman of IPOD member NRM) for final decision-making to the National Security Council.⁴⁰

When we understand inclusiveness as inclusion of marginalized groups, the evaluations are much less clear. This principle is the least mentioned as influencing the results of dialogues. This is remarkable, because there is increasing scientific evidence that the presence of marginalized groups at the dialogue table can influence the dialogue proceedings and outcome.

Nonetheless, the evaluators state that, in one case, working specifically with only marginalized groups contributed significantly to the success of the dialogue. For the inter-party dialogue platform in Myanmar, “All members are motivated to engage in dialogue and praise the open-minded attitude and common goal on state-level benefits as part of the platform’s culture. This is also conditioned by the platform members having the same identity as smaller ethnic groups from the same state (not belonging to the major ethnic group in Myanmar).”⁴¹

4.4 Flexibility

We always adjust our programmes to changing circumstances.

Regarding the influence of the principle of flexibility on NIMD’s interventions, the evaluators state that NIMD “has been particularly effective in adapting its interventions to the changing context and to events outside its sphere of influence, so as to avoid halting of activities and continuing implementing interventions in a way that remained relevant to the country context and that could still contribute to achieving results.”⁴² In short, the principle has a highly influential and positive role in getting to results, especially when the political contexts are or become increasingly complex.

For example, on Colombia and Burundi, the evaluators note that the political context developed differently from initial expectations. In Burundi, the space for dialogue and opposition remained

³⁷ Ecorys, 2021.

³⁸ MDF, 2020.

³⁹ MDf, 2020:38.

⁴⁰ On March 26 2020 Uganda’s constitutional court annulled the repressive Public Order Management Act 2013 following a case filed by civil society actors rendering further actions on the same on the part of IPOD unnecessary.

⁴¹ Haapanen, van der Jagt, and Scheers, 2019.

⁴² Ecorys, 2021:48

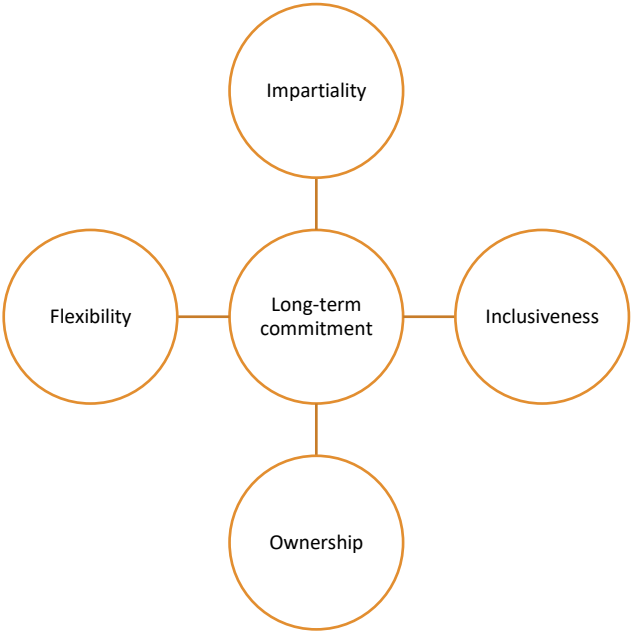
constricted rather than progressively opening up. In Colombia, the implementation of the Peace Agreement did not proceed as foreseen. Yet, “NIMD has been able to adjust to the context and in both cases continue to preserve a (albeit limited in the case of Burundi) space for dialogue through its interventions. The importance of being flexible in adapting the foreseen approach, the activities and their calendar was further noticed in the context of Burundi, where BLTP reported that working with political parties in nascent democracies and post-conflict situations remains a sensitive area that demands this type of flexibility for interventions to be successful.⁴³

4.5 Long-term commitment

Political transformation, building trust and strengthening political systems takes time. We rely on building long-lasting relationships with local partners and institutions.

The principle of long-term commitment is important, particularly because it enables and strengthens the other principles of impartiality, inclusivity, ownership and flexibility.

Impartiality is evaluated as having a considerable influence on the success of NIMD’s interventions. It is influential, not only as a way of working, but also as a means to build NIMD’s reputation. But it takes time, and is therefore dependent on long-term presence in the country.⁴⁴ In short, the longer NIMD is present in a country, the stronger it can build its reputation of impartiality, which in turn has a positive influence on its dialogue interventions.⁴⁵ The example of NIMD’s partner Zimbabwe Institute (ZI), as already discussed in this chapter and further elaborated on in Chapter 5, is illustrative. ZI has been working impartially on political party dialogue since 2009, which contributes strongly to its reputation of an impartial party. ZI continues to be trusted by both the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union- Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T).⁴⁶



Regarding the principle of inclusivity, the long-term presence of NIMD or a partner contributes to building trust with all political actors from both governing and opposition parties. These high levels of trust with different political actors makes it possible for NIMD to work on the basis of inclusivity and bring them to the same table. For example, in Myanmar, the “creating time for relationship development”⁴⁷ and the long-term “nurturing a supportive environment by setting and upholding

⁴³ Ecorys, 2021:47, 48
⁴⁴ Ecorys, 2021:31.
⁴⁵ Ecorys 2021:32; MDF, 2020: Annex 3.
⁴⁶ Chitiga et al., 2021
⁴⁷ MDF, 2021:28.

rules of inclusion and respect”⁴⁸ were evaluated as positively influencing the willingness of the dialogue participants from different parties to engage with one another.

Regarding the principle of ownership and embeddedness, these can only be created over a considerable period of time. It is therefore strongly connected to the principle of long-term commitment. The evaluators state that the commitment of each country team is one of the determining factors that can make or break an intervention, and that this relates “in particular to the extent they own the country programme.”⁴⁹ Therefore “this could be one of the arguments to open or keep NIMD country offices in programme countries.”⁵⁰

Finally, regarding the principle of flexibility, this principle has a positive influence in itself. Yet, that positive influence is amplified further when combined with the principle of long-term commitment. To continue with the example of Myanmar, next to inclusivity, the combination of flexibility and long-term commitment had a strong positive influence on the inter-party dialogue platform. The respondents interviewed by evaluators believe that the inter-party dialogue platform “due to its long-term nature and flexibility, could create trust and a dialogue culture among its participants.”⁵¹ In addition, the programme’s “needs-driven, flexible programming – including budget – has enabled maintaining the emerging process of drafting a law” in the public interest on food safety.⁵²

5. NIMD’s signature dialogue interventions

⁴⁸ MDF, 2021:30.

⁴⁹ MDF, 2018:np.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ MDF, 2020:Annex 3.

⁵² Haapanen, van der Jagt, and Scheers, 2019.

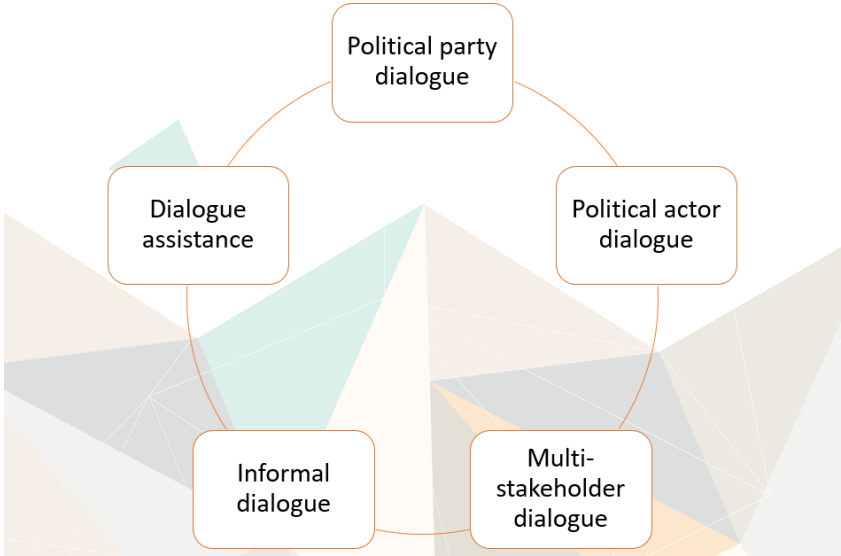
In its early beginnings, NIMD worked predominantly with one type of dialogue intervention; inter-party dialogue platforms. These were long-term platforms in which the ownership lay fully with the political parties. NIMD facilitated the meetings, provided all the technical and logistical support the political parties needed, and built political parties’ capacities and willingness to be part of the dialogue.⁵³

As the evaluations show, in some cases, these platforms continue to contribute to trust-building between political parties, and subsequently to democratic development. However, these evaluations also show that in other cases the political context proved too much of a challenge for this specific intervention to lead to concrete results, or even to continue. Indeed, the “analysis shows that the instrument only works in favourable conditions, which means the instrument needs adaptation or replacement by other means when working in adversarial and difficult environments.”⁵⁴

Especially in contexts that are dominated by disabling factors, such as increased repression, one-party dominance, or very weak party structures, it proved difficult to continue an effective political party dialogue via the platforms only. The global trend of decreasing democratic space and the deteriorating rule of law also significantly contributed to that, as some governments became less willing to accept institutionalized safe meetings spaces for ruling and opposition parties alike.⁵⁵

In response, the NIMD network is increasingly adapting its strategies and innovating its dialogue toolbox in response to these contextual challenges. It is clear from the evaluations that a more diverse array of political and civic actors are now targeted in different types of dialogue interventions. This report shows that the NIMD network moved from one to five signature dialogue interventions; political party dialogue, political actor dialogue, multi-stakeholder dialogue, informal dialogue, and dialogue assistance.

All these interventions are designed to fit each and every specific political context that NIMD works in, and can be used to follow-up or complement each other when and where possible. NIMD’s five signature dialogue interventions, with the evaluated evidence of their results, are further discussed below.



5.1 Political party dialogue

Defining political party dialogue

⁵³ See for more information, for example, the NIMD publication ‘The power of dialogue: Our stories’ <https://nimd.org/theme-brochures/the-power-of-inter-party-dialogue-our-stories/>

⁵⁴ MDF, 2018.

⁵⁵ See for two studies by NIMD and EPD on democratic space: <https://nimd.org/how-to-prevent-shrinking-democratic-space-a-study/> and <https://nimd.org/repression-and-resilience-diagnosing-closing-space-mid-pandemic/>

In its political party dialogue interventions, NIMD facilitates dialogue between representatives of political parties. Often, the parties' participation in the dialogue depends on a minimal presence in parliament. These dialogues can take place via NIMD's **inter-party dialogue platforms**. These are long-term, safe, regulated and institutionalized meeting spaces for political parties. Most often, the platform's rules are written by the political parties themselves, and formally signed in a Memorandum of Understanding. Usually, a new Memorandum of Understanding is drafted and signed after the elections. The platforms allow party representatives to meet and interact on a regular basis, mediate tensions, build trust, and set, negotiate and adopt shared agendas, and develop proposals for policies and legislation. Because of the often strong connection with parliament, the adoption of these proposals for policies and legislation can also be a goal of an inter-party dialogue platform.

Increasingly, NIMD also facilitates political party dialogue outside of formal platforms. In such dialogues, NIMD gathers the political parties around a specific theme or policy in so-called **thematic political party dialogues**. These dialogues are usually short-term, and are dissolved once the theme or

policy is sufficiently discussed. The parties usually do not write the dialogue's rules and procedures, nor sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding. Still, NIMD makes sure these dialogues take place in safe and regulated spaces and operate on the basis of inclusivity, ensuring all present parties to have an equal voice. Even though the thematic political party dialogues have a less institutionalized character as compared the inter-party dialogue platforms, the goals are the same; it provides a space for party representatives to meet and interact on a regular basis, mediate tensions, build trust, and set, negotiate and adopt shared agendas, and develop (and where possible adopt), proposals for policies and legislation.

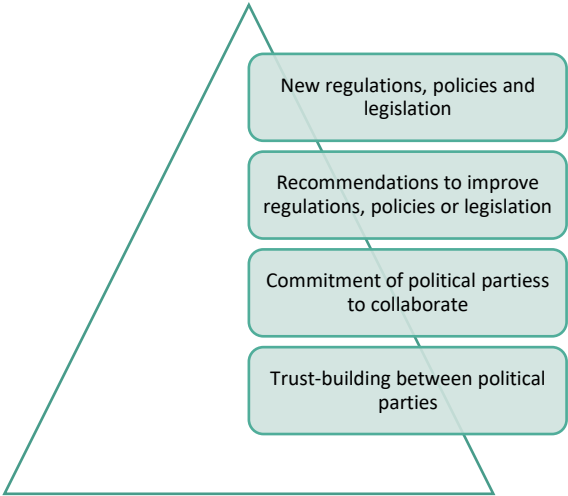
Countries

Over the past five years, NIMD supported political party dialogues a.o. in

- Mali
- Kenya
- Burundi
- Mozambique
- Tunisia
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- Zimbabwe

Expected results

The results NIMD strives for in its political party dialogues are (i) trust-building between political parties, (ii) commitments to collaborate, (iii) shared recommendations for regulations, policies or legislation, and (iv) the adoption of new regulations, policies or legislation. In theory, these stages follow on one another in a political party dialogue process. In practice, however, the dialogue goes back and forth between different stages, gets stuck in one, or suddenly moves to another. The political context strongly determines what the highest attainable goal is of the political party dialogue. For example, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings, trust-building by itself is considered an important result.



Evidence of political party dialogue results

CEMI in Tunisia: Trust-building in a new democracy

Introduction

CEMI, NIMD and Demo Finland started their collaboration in Tunisia in 2012. The core aim of the programme has been building the capacity for the parties and politicians to work effectively in this new democracy, and to encourage interparty dialogue as part of this objective. To achieve this, CEMI, NIMD and Demo Finland together set-up the Tunis School of Politics (TSoP). It aims to build capacities of politicians to increase their effectiveness and support the inclusiveness of Tunisian political parties in a multiparty setting. With the suspension of parliament in July 2021 by President Kais Saied, the inter-party dialogue is being re-assessed.

CEMI

The Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) is an NIMD partner led by Ahmed Driss. It is a think-tank based in Tunis. In a consortium with Demo Finland and NIMD, it runs TSoP (Tunis School of Politics) and facilitates the related inter-party dialogue platform.

Evaluated result

“On 31st March 2016, 14 major political parties established an inter-party dialogue platform, which they use to address key political issues in a peaceful and constructive way. It is the first platform of its kind to be created in post-revolution Tunisia. Previously the members of different political parties attacked each other in discussions and merely defended their own opinions. Through the use of dialogue, the platform has increased their interest for constructive collaboration and harmonisation of collective responses, and it has created a sense of mutual understanding among and between political actors.”⁵⁶

Evaluated contribution

“CEMI, as a recognized impartial locally rooted actor, used its connections with existing political parties through its Tunisian School of Politics programme, and also established new connections with new political parties to create the platform. CEMI brought them together as a response to an expressed need for dialogue and formalised it in the platform where they provide them with a safe and trusted space.”⁵⁷

“The overall relevance of the programme in strengthening the capacities of political actors and promoting inclusive [inter-party] dialogue in the constantly evolving political context in Tunisia has been very strong. The specific added value of the programme compared to other democracy support interventions has been related to its approach to provide capacity building for political actors and at the same time facilitate a safe space for them to interact and collaborate. Also, the strong emphasis on the quality of capacity building is seen as an important distinguishing feature.”⁵⁸

“The establishment of the dialogue platform involving 13 political parties and gathering high-level political actors including party leaders and parliamentarians together in platform meetings and other dialogue events to discuss and debate on issues of mutual interest can be considered as a clear achievement of the evaluated programme. This was repeatedly noted also by party representatives in the focus group discussions and interviews of this evaluation. The dialogue activities have enabled them to learn to know people from other parties and strengthened their capacities to listen to different points of view.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018.

⁵⁷ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018.

⁵⁸ FIAN Consulting Oy, 2021: 3: 1001 - 3: 1591.

⁵⁹ FIAN Consulting Oy, 2021: 11: 678 - 11: 1436.

BLTP in Burundi: Maintaining political party dialogue in decreasing democratic space

Introduction

NIMD, together with its partner organization the BLTP aims to contribute to democracy in Burundi through a combination of different interventions, including: implementing organizational and programmatic capacity strengthening for political parties; providing democracy education through the Burundi Youth Lab; and stimulating and facilitating inter-party dialogue. The shifting political climate following the 2018 constitutional referendum meant NIMD's political party dialogue sessions on the political and electoral framework have faced a setback, and NIMD is currently in consultation with local leaders, the Burundian government, and international actors to identify how NIMD can facilitate a national inter-party dialogue platform in the near future.

BLTP

The Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) is an NIMD partner led by Fabien Nsengimana. It is a non-profit organization registered in Burundi. Its overall goal is to build leadership capacity in Burundi. The program assists politicians, political parties, as well as future political and civil leaders to acquire tools and techniques for non-violent communication, negotiation and conflict management.

Evaluated result

“NIMD and BLTP have, through the CSO Project, significantly contributed to some political parties being prepared and able to participate in interparty discussions on critical issues related to re-solving the immediate crisis and/or addressing underlying issues⁶⁰”

“In Burundi, NIMD's overarching accomplishment has been to create and preserve a ‘political space’ – one of the few, if not the only remaining in Burundi in which political opinions can (at least to some extent) be exchanged and different parties can interact. This space is clearly highly valued by political party members, including the governing party, and since the breakdown of formal interparty talks sponsored by the international community represents perhaps the sole route by which conflict resolution can take place.⁶¹”

“Whilst NIMD have performed well against the intermediate outcomes, progress in some of the focus countries has been stymied by changes in the political context. This is perhaps most evident in Burundi where the political crisis which broke out in 2015 continues to detrimentally affect NIMD and BLTP's intervention plans. Despite the increasingly challenging environment, NIMD and BLTP were able to successfully navigate the political context and continue regular [inter-party] dialogue meetings involving the main political parties in Burundi. Although they were only able to facilitate the dialogue platforms at the provincial level (not at the national level), the fact they are still operating at all is a significant achievement.”⁶²

Evaluated contribution

“Creating a space for political dialogue in an increasingly challenging environment is a critically important ‘meta- outcome’ to which all individual outcomes and project activities have contributed. The trust and space to execute activities to strengthen internal knowledge, skills and processes of political parties has been built by project activities as a whole, notably facilitating dialogue on the important issues at stake; training in internal and external communication, political party dialogue, and non-violent communication; and internal reflection meetings with political parties. This process has created the trust that NIMD and BLTP will act as a neutral third party. The maintenance and, in

⁶⁰ Mauremootoo, 2018: 8: 4290 - 8: 4690.

⁶¹ Global Partners Governance, 2018: 294.

⁶² Global Partners Governance, 2018: 327.

several cases, enhancement of political dialogue is an indicator of strengthened internal knowledge, skills and processes of political parties.”⁶³

IPOD in Uganda: New legislation on election campaigning

Introduction

NIMD’s overall objective in Uganda is to help foster a well-functioning, strong and vibrant multiparty democracy. The core aims are therefore to strengthen parties to be more programmatic and responsive, to promote the inclusion of women and youth in the political space, and to facilitate the dialogue process for parties, civil society, and other stakeholders. The programme has two main aspects. The first focuses on facilitating an inclusive political dialogue between the parties represented in parliament. The second supports parties as they develop into mature organizations with a sound organizational structures and distinctive programmatic identities. Currently, after the elections in 2021 that were marred by violence and human rights violations, the political dialogue is being re-assessed.

IPOD

The Inter-party Organization for Dialogue (IPOD) is an inter-party dialogue platform facilitated by NIMD Uganda, led by Frank Rusa. It has been operating for over ten years. It brings political parties together as equals in the dialogue.

Evaluated result

“The team used a favourable context to set up and support high-level party dialogue to work on the Public Order Management Act (POMA). [...] 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. ⁶⁴

“In December 2018, during the first IPOD Leaders’ Summit, the leaders of IPOD’s member parties officially meet at the first ever IPOD Leaders’ Summit. During the party leaders’ dialogue, the interpretation of POMA soon emerges as a shared area of concern. All parties agree to participate in the post-Summit discussions on POMA. In May 2019, at the Second Leaders’ Summit, leaders discussed the results of the IPOD consultations and they committed to regular interparty dialogue with the government and consultations with the National Security Council. Since then, the POMA regulations formulated by IPOD party representatives and the Attorney General have been forwarded to the National Security Council.⁶⁵ IPOD parties are expected to host a third Leaders’ Summit in 2020, and IPOD has also offered to host dialogue regarding ongoing legal cases on POMA.”⁶⁶

Evaluated contribution

“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

⁶³ Mauremootoo, 2018: 7: 2112 - 7: 2971.

⁶⁴ MDF, 2020: 25: 1290 - 25: 1609.

⁶⁵ NIMD facilitated the process to develop a new set of POMA regulations that were submitted to the second IPOD summit of Leaders that attracted the Presidents of all Parliamentary political parties including President Museveni in May 2019. They were later referred to the National Security Council for final input before they could be tabled in Parliament. However, on March 26 2020 Uganda’s constitutional court annulled the repressive Public Order Management Act 2013 following a case filed by civil society actors rendering further actions on the same on the part of IPOD unnecessary.

⁶⁶ NIMD, 2019.

political parties. Among other topics, dialogue focused on restrictive new legislation regarding election campaigning, namely the Public Order Management Act (POMA).⁶⁷

CMDID in Mali: Improving the Electoral Law

Introduction

NIMD’s work in Mali started with an interparty dialogue platform and a focus on electoral reform (this case study). Since then, two coups took place in Mali. After an extensive political economy analysis, the focus of the programme changed from supporting political party dialogue to improving the dialogue between political actors and citizens (case study on page 44).

CMDID
The Malian Centre for Interparty Dialogue and Democracy (CMDID) is an inter-party dialogue platform of 52 political parties created in April 2008. It brings together political parties from the opposition, the majority, and centre.

Evaluated result

“In September 2016, the National Assembly of Mali passed amendments to the draft Electoral Law, based on recommendations from the CMDID interparty dialogue platform. These recommendations included the ban of campaigning in places of worship and measures to clarify the situation of voter registration cards. Although the recommendation on establishing a single structure in charge of elections was not included in the final bill, it was included as a recommendation to the Government in the report from the Law Committee.”

Evaluated contribution

“CMDID, in collaboration with AWEPA, has organized a parliamentarian retreat and the dialogue platform workshop during which the recommendations were formulated was organized in June 2016 by CMDID. CMDID and AWEPA later established a follow-up committee that, amongst other, conducted a lobby session with the MPs from the Law Committee in Ségou in August 2016 to make modifications to the electoral law.”

MySoP in Myanmar: Securing food safety through new legislation

Introduction

Together with Demo Finland, NIMD started working in Myanmar in 2014. The programme in Myanmar has two key aims. The first is to help the politicians from all the political parties to enhance their knowledge and skills for working in a democracy. The second is to develop the practice of collaboration by enhancing the practice of political party dialogue. Due to the military takeover on 1 February 2021, NIMD has temporarily suspended its activities in Myanmar. We are currently building a new programme to continue working in the country.

⁶⁷MDF, 2020: 28: 4746 - 29: 840.

Evaluated result

“On 11th June 2019, during the fifteenth session of the Shan State parliament in Taunggyi, Shan State, the twelve MPs members of the [inter-party dialogue platform] 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.”

Evaluated contribution

“The platform’s supportive environment, nurtured by MySoP staff, has gradually resulted in a truly collaborative effort to reach this outcome. Among MySoP’s specific contributions are facilitation and communication with MDP members in a way that helped them to feel comfortable and remain friendly in an inter-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 on a topic beyond individual party interests. As the political actors 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”.⁶⁸

MySoP

The Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) is a joint program of NIMD and Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland), and is led by Htet Oo Wai. MySoP is based in Yangon, and focuses on strengthening the democratic role of politicians and political parties at the regional level, and enhancing the practice of political party dialogue.

IMD in Mozambique: trust-building and consultation between political parties

Introduction

NIMD’s work in Mozambique started in 2000. It first opened an NIMD office, which later became an independent partner the Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD). IMD’s activities mainly focus on trying to reduce the tensions between parliamentary parties and creating space for dialogue and constructive collaboration between political actors. The programme facilitated training on dialogue skills for members of political parties and electoral actors, as well as their institutional development. It also stimulated the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders, such as extra-parliamentary political parties, Provincial Assemblies, electoral management and administration bodies, civil society organizations, religious leaders and the international community. The IMD facilitates platforms for dialogue between political actors and other actors, as a useful tool for bringing together political-electoral actors and civil society. It supports consolidating political trust between them, which eventually contributes to a decrease in political-electoral conflicts.

IMD

Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD) is an NIMD partner led by Hermenegildo Mulhovo. IMD was founded as a country office of NIMD in 2001, and became a fully independent organization in 2016. With NIMD, programme activities mainly focus on reducing the tensions between the parliamentary parties and creating space for dialogue and constructive collaboration.

Evaluated result

Between 2016 and 2018 “the Frelimo, Renamo and MDM political parties represented in the Parliament invited all the extra-parliamentary parties to consult their views on the political, economic and social situation.”

⁶⁸ MDF, 2021.

Evaluated contribution

Since 2016, “IMD offered and provided technical and financial assistance for the regular meetings of all political parties with emphasis on agenda-focused meetings.”⁶⁹

“In May 2017, the Mozambican president Filipe Nyusi invited all the extra-parliamentary parties to discuss the country’s political and economic crisis. Extra-parliamentary parties are now recognized by the head of state as relevant.”

Additional evaluated contribution (moderate)

In early 2017, “IMD proposed a roundtable for all the political parties with the country’s political and economic crisis on the agenda.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018.

⁷⁰ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018: Annex 1: Pos. 113-116.

5.2 Political actor dialogue

Defining political actor dialogue

Next to political party dialogue, which focuses specifically on political parties’ representatives, NIMD also facilitates dialogue between political actors more broadly. NIMD’s political actor dialogues are safe meeting spaces for a variety of political actors, in which they can meet and interact, mediate tensions, build trust, and set, negotiate and adapt shared agendas on different policies. Who is considered a political actor depends strongly on the political system, but political actor dialogues can

include (a mix of) high-level policymakers, members of parliamentary committees and caucuses, representatives of political parties, and representatives from state-related institutions, such as electoral bodies.

Countries

Over the past five years, NIMD supported political actor dialogue a.o. in

- Benin
- Colombia
- El Salvador
- Georgia
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Mali
- Mozambique

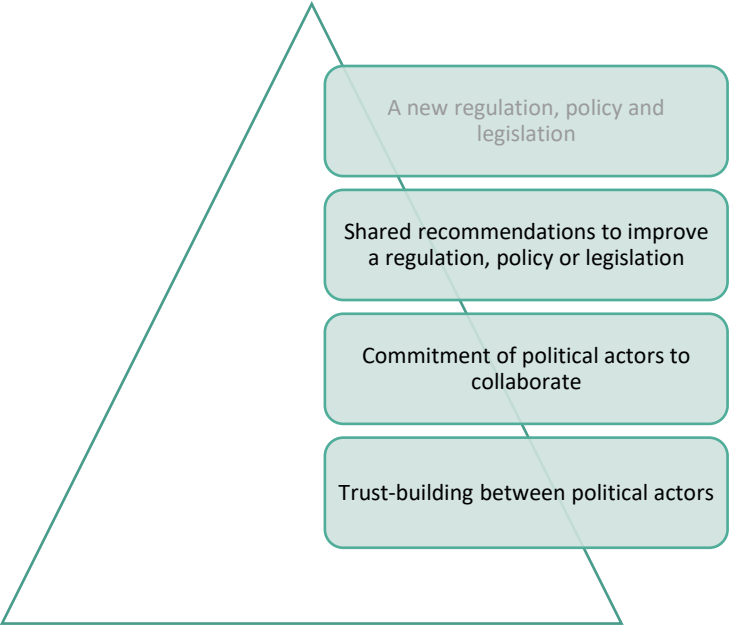
Political actor dialogues are usually short-term, and are dissolved once their specific goal, such as a shared recommendation to improve a specific policy, is met. The dialogue participants do not write the dialogue’s rules and procedures, nor sign a formal Memorandum of Understanding to establish their commitment and participation in the dialogue. Still, NIMD makes sure these dialogues still take place in safe and regulated spaces. A political actor dialogue can be an independent

intervention, but is often also implemented to support other signature dialogue interventions, in particular political party dialogues.

Expected results

The results NIMD strives for in its political actor dialogues are (i) trust-building, (ii) commitments to collaborate on certain themes or policies, and (iii) recommendations for regulations, policies or legislation. Also the (iv) formal adoption of new regulations, policies or legislation could be a result NIMD strives for in the dialogue, but this is strongly dependent on the reason for the dialogue and whether the dialogue participants have a strong link with parliament or other regulations or policy-making bodies.

As compared to political party dialogue, and specifically the inter-party dialogue platforms, this dialogue intervention has a more flexible character. Which political actors are invited to the dialogue, what topics are discussed, and, consequently, which results can be strived for, is fully dependent on the incentives and developments in the political context.



Evidence of political actor dialogue results

Zimbabwe Institute: Building capacity for dialogue and conflict resolution

Introduction

NIMD works together in Zimbabwe with its long-standing partner Zimbabwe Institute (ZI). The programme evaluated in this case study had two aims. First, to build trust and dialogue between the parliamentary parties. Secondly, to provide support to the Zimbabwean Parliament. A primary focus of this was to enhance the political participation of women and young people. The parliamentary support programme included support for this institution in overseeing the reconciliation process in dealing with the past, as well as enhancing the administrative and reporting capacities of the Parliament of Zimbabwe. Under the ZPPD (see box) ZI capacitated the four political parties represented in the Parliament of Zimbabwe with

ZI

The Zimbabwe Institute (ZI) is an NIMD partner led by Isaac Maposa. ZI works with political parties' dialogue since 2009. In 2017, it started the "Zimbabwe Political Parties Dialogue" (ZPPD) project, aimed at contributing towards increasing trust and tolerance among the political parties, in collaboration with the Olof Palme International Center.

an interparty dialogue platform meant to bridge the political divide in the country and allow for mutual engagement and dialogue among usually antagonistic political parties. To support the functioning of this platform, dialogue with a range of other political actors was also part of the programme.

Evaluated result

"The Political Parties through ZI engaged ZEC and the Ministry of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs in pursuit of streamlining voter registration and other electoral processes beyond party agendas demonstrating the value and application of dialogue skills acquired through ZI's technical expertise and facilitation."⁷¹

"Key outputs of the ZPPD in the pre-elections phase namely the Code of Conduct, the Peace Pledge, capacity building of various political players, financial support for the election agents and facilitating the inter-party dialogue around elections contributed to Zimbabwe holding relatively peaceful 2018 harmonised elections. The Code of Conduct provided political parties with a common text and message on the accepted conduct in multiparty elections. The political leaders and other candidates preached peaceful campaigning and encouraged their followers to fully adhere to the Code of Conduct. Civil society organisations who observed the processes for the Code of Conduct amendment workshop and a Training of Trainers for polling agents stated that seeing the ruling party and opposition party working together helped remove fear from citizens."⁷²

Evaluated contribution

"ZI created a consortium with diverse capacities and expertise in facilitating dialogue processes, mediation, donor engagement, negotiations among others that helped to achieve the goal and objectives of the project at a low cost. It was reported that through this partnership, the project was able to leverage the expertise from the external partners to complement local efforts. According to the members of the consortium, the partnership worked well."⁷³

"Zimbabwe Institute was instrumental in the crafting and leading the processes towards the development of the electoral Code of Conduct in collaboration with Zimbabwe Election Commission.

⁷¹ Chitiga, 2021, p. 18: 2003.

⁷² Chitiga, 2021: p. 25: 370.

⁷³ Chitiga, 2021, p. 24: 4.

The strategy of partnering with ZEC and NPRC was effective as it enabled the mainstreaming of the process within the two mandated Chapter 12 institutions bodies. Representatives from both ZEC and NPRC acknowledged that ZI was able to bring to meetings senior members of political parties and had facilitated interaction between ZEC and political parties at the provincial level through the provincial liaison structures. They singled out the importance of the provincial structures in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties having worked closely with them in resolving disputes in the run up to the 2018 elections. The political liaison officers were also described as “a gateway to both political parties and parliament and other quasi government agencies like ZEC and NPRC”.⁷⁴

NIMD Colombia: Signing a commitment to counter polarization and violence

Introduction

NIMD has worked in Colombia since 2010, with the NIMD Colombia office set up in 2014. The programme is focused on the country’s democratization. We do this through two mechanisms: by strengthening the capacities of Colombian parties and by supporting the implementation of the Peace Agreement. By strengthening trust in Colombia’s democratic institutions and facilitating the participation of excluded groups such as women and minority groups, NIMD and its partners hope to support a long-lasting peace in the country, as well as pursuing a more open, inclusive and transparent political system.

NIMD Colombia
NIMD Colombia is led by Ángela Rodríguez Sarmiento, and was set up in 2014. The programme is focused on the country’s democratization process in two ways: by strengthening the capacities of Colombian parties and by supporting the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Evaluated result

“In April 2017, Colombian politicians and magistrates of the National Electoral Council came together to discuss the high levels of political polarization around the signing and implementation of the Peace Agreement. The members of the National Electoral Council were encouraged to identify de-polarization actions. Together, they identified points of agreement to reduce the tension and danger of violence. Subsequently, they formally signed a commitment to respect political plurality.”

Evaluated contribution

“NIMD, in association with the Congress Peace Commission, the Viva la Ciudadanía Corporation and FESCOL, hosted a lunch meeting on 'Polarization and convergence: post-conflict elections'. It was held on April 21, 2017. International guests from Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile and Spain shared their experience in post-conflict elections, and the nine Colombian political actors of the National Electoral Council were encouraged to identify de-polarization actions.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴Chitiga, 2021: p. 23: 2159
⁷⁵ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018, Annex 1.

5.3 Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Defining multi-stakeholder dialogue

NIMD’s political party and political actor dialogue interventions focus on the political level only. However, some contexts require trust-building and supporting collaboration between the political and the civic level as well. This civic level can include representatives from CSOs, unions, advocacy groups,

protests movements, and businesses. NIMD’s multi-stakeholder dialogues are usually short-term, and are dissolved once their specific goal, such as discussing a certain theme or policy, is met. A multi-stakeholder dialogue can be an independent intervention, but is often also implemented to support other signature dialogue interventions, in particular political party dialogues.

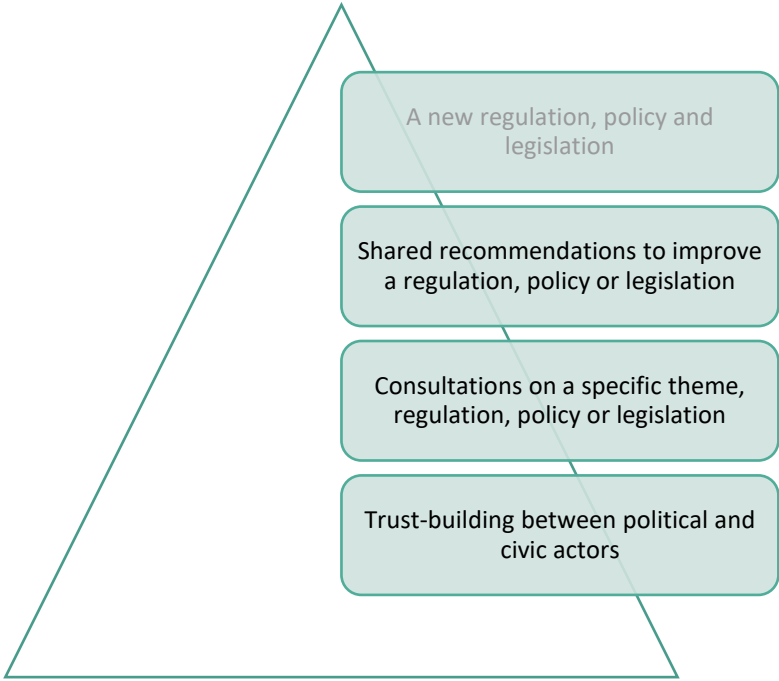
Countries

Over the past five years, NIMD supported multi-stakeholder dialogue a.o. in

- 🔥 Burundi
- 🔥 Colombia
- 🔥 Indonesia
- 🔥 Mali
- 🔥 Mozambique
- 🔥 Ukraine

Expected results

The goals that NIMD strives for in its multi-stakeholder dialogues are (i) trust-building between political and civic actors, (ii) consultations on a specific theme, regulation, policy or legislation, and (iii) joint recommendations to improve regulations, policies and legislation. Due to the civic background of a part of the participants, in particular their lack of direct connection to parliament, the adoption of new laws and regulations can be, but is not by definition, a goal of NIMD’s multi-stakeholder dialogues.



Evidence of multi-stakeholder dialogue results

CMD-K in Kenya: Connecting citizens, CSOs, and political parties

Introduction

NIMD has been active in Kenya since 2003, when we were instrumental in setting up the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-Kenya) as dialogue platform for all parliamentary parties. Since then, the NIMD programme has supported CMD-Kenya in hosting interparty dialogue, implementing activities geared at supporting political parties, and strengthening parties’ connections with broader society. Another important programmatic focus is the strengthening of the role of women and underrepresented groups in political life. Since 2019, NIMD also started a partnership with Mzalendo, a Kenyan parliamentary support organization. Our collaboration focusses on increasing parliamentary transparency and openness by bringing citizens closer to their elected representatives, and bolstering the position of women and young people within parliament.

Evaluated result

“Important outcomes for a conducive environment for political-civic interaction were related to new collaborations of parties with civic actors, under which we include the media, and the public. For these outcomes, CMD (as a party-membership based platform) sought to engage civic actors with its work, and gain understanding of the importance of parties and multi-party politics to Kenya’s democracy. This was primarily done through a better engagement of the media, and through the People’s Dialogue Festivals which engaged well with the media and with members of the public especially youth.”⁷⁶

“CMD has been successful through engagement with the media and especially through the People’s Dialogue Festivals to draw attention of civic actors (media, and youth members of the public especially) to the importance of parties and multiparty politics to Kenya’s democracy. This signifies new collaboration of parties with civic actors, but mainly through CMD and not through individual parties.”⁷⁷

CMD-Kenya

The Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-Kenya) is an inter-party dialogue platform for all parliamentary parties, led by Frankline Mukwanja. It was set up in 2003 with support from NIMD. Since then, CMD-Kenya focuses on hosting interparty dialogue, implementing activities geared at supporting political parties, and strengthening parties’ connections with broader society.

Evaluated contribution

“From the 7th to 9th March 2019, the media started to extensively cover the inaugural People Dialogue Festival organized by CMD Kenya at the National Museum of Kenya.

On 5th- 7th March, 2020 during the PDF at the National Museums of Kenya, young people took the opportunity to engage with leaders on social media and in person on governance issues.

On 5th to 7th March, 2020 at the People Dialogue Festival at the National Museum of Kenya in Nairobi political leadership increasingly engaged with young citizens by answering questions on issues of performance and policy.

⁷⁶ Van der Jagt and Scheers, 2020: 136.
⁷⁷ Van der Jagt and Scheers, 2020: 143.

5th -7th March, 2020, during the PDF 2020, Kenyan youth took lead in communicating CMD Kenya's political work and involvement in political party dialogue through social media.”⁷⁸

NIMD Guatemala: Building alliances to support the law on electoral reform

Introduction

NIMD's work in Guatemala started in 2002. NIMD's first major project was facilitating political party dialogue, together with UNDP, between all the political parties over an 18-month period which resulted in the signing of a development plan for the country called the 'shared national agenda.' This was a plan for recovery following the armed conflict, which had continued in Guatemala for 36 years. Since that first project, NIMD has continued to facilitate interparty dialogue around themes of shared concern including political party reform, security, environmental governance and the inclusion in politics of underrepresented groups (such as women, young people and indigenous people).

Evaluated result

“NIMD Guatemala [in 2016] successfully supported adoption of the law on electoral reform through TA, organising dialogues. It supported civil society, in particular youth and women organisations by providing democracy education and resources to undertake watchdog function and organise a dialogue between policymakers and CSOs (including access to info a.o. through monthly updates).”

Evaluated contribution

“NIMD Guatemala built and actively engaged in alliances with other parties to affect political culture-actors-sytem in favour of multi-party democracy. It helped organise Youth Collectives (by offering facilitators) leading to focused and effective political lobby of collectives and institutional strengthening. Also, it provided financial support for the capacity development of the parliamentarian internal Departamento de Estudios e Investigaciones Legislativos (DEIL). Finally, it provided capacity support for the development of the Electoral Management Body.”⁷⁹

NIMD Guatemala

NIMD began its work in Central America with the opening of the NIMD Guatemala office in 2002. It is led by Susan Batres, and aims to strengthen the country's democratization process and the electoral political system. It does so, among others, by facilitating political party, political actor, and multi-stakeholder dialogue and providing technical assistance to influence the improvement of democratic laws.

Colombia: Creating for space for LGBTI+ in political parties

Evaluated result

In 2016 and 2017 in Bogotá, four conservative political parties met with representatives of an LGBTI + organization (Caribe Afirmativo) to engage in dialogue and to receive information and recommendations on how to include this population in their internal structures. These meetings enabled the political parties to identify barriers for the inclusion of the LGBTI + population in their political parties and an opportunity to develop improve participation and representation of this population group in the Colombian political-electoral system.

NIMD Colombia

NIMD Colombia is led by Ángela Rodríguez Sarmiento, and was set up in 2014. The programme is focused on the country's democratization process in two ways; by strengthening the capacities of Colombian parties and by supporting the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

⁷⁸ Van der Jagt and Scheers, 2020: 155.

⁷⁹ MDF, 2018: 196.

Evaluated contribution

NIMD during 2015 and 2016, in association with the Observatory of LGBTI + Political Participation, published the document "Routes for the inclusion of LGBTI people in Colombian political parties and movements". In 2016, four meetings were held with conservative political parties (Conservador, MIRA, AICO and Cambio Radical) and the organization Caribe Afirmativo to make visible the barriers for effective political participation of the LGBTI + population and promote actions of inclusion and non-discrimination.⁸⁰

Mozambique: Increasing understanding about environmental issues

Evaluated result

"On 5 November 2016, the Fifth Parliamentary Commission on Agriculture, the Economy and the Environment convened a meeting of political parties and civil society representatives to discuss the problems of extractive industries. This was the first time that the Fifth Commission consulted political parties and civil society representatives at national level. Through this consultation there is greater probability that knowledge unknown to the Commission [about the perception, interest and contribution of political parties in matters related to the environment] will now be taken into account."

Evaluated contribution

In mid-2015, IMD offered to provide technical and financial assistance for this meeting."⁸¹

IMD

Instituto para Democracia Multipartidária (IMD) is an NIMD partner led by Hermenegildo Mulhovo. IMD was founded as a country office of NIMD in 2001, and became a fully independent organization in 2016. With NIMD, programme activities mainly focus on reducing the tensions between the parliamentary parties and creating space for dialogue and constructive collaboration.

⁸⁰ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018.

⁸¹ Scheers and Wilson-Grau, 2018: Annex 1, Pos. 98-101.

5.4 Informal dialogue

Defining informal dialogue

NIMD’s informal dialogues are meeting spaces where political actors or political and civic actors can informally meet and interact, explore each other’s political perspectives on different themes, and build trust. They are most strongly characterized by their informal nature; there are no formal commitments to collaborate, no expectations to collaborate towards a formal result, such as a policy recommendation, and the participants can be different in each dialogue session. In addition, the participants do not necessarily participate in the dialogue as representatives of their party or civic organization. This makes this type of dialogue particularly suited for trust-building. Therefore, an informal dialogue is in particular a suitable independent intervention in contexts where more formalized dialogues are not possible, for example, due to severe political repression. In addition, it is often also implemented to support trust-building of other signature dialogue interventions, in particular political party dialogues.

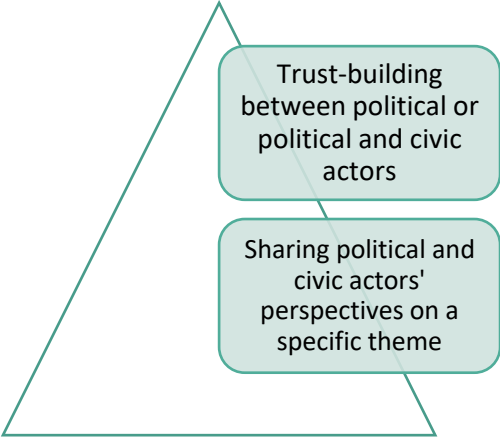
Countries

Over the past five years, NIMD supported informal dialogues a.o. in

- Colombia
- Jordan
- Mali
- Mozambique
- Tunisia
- Ukraine
- Myanmar

Expected results

The results NIMD strives are in its informal dialogue interventions are supporting political or political and civic actors to explore each other’s perspectives on a certain theme, and trust-building between them.



Evidence of informal dialogue results

CEMI in Tunisia: Understanding perspectives and trust-building

Evaluated result

“The couscous politique events have brought together representatives from different parties, high level political decision-makers and to some extent from civil society to discuss relevant topics such as government budget, gender equality, human rights, decentralization, and management of local affairs⁸²

Evaluated contribution

“Since 2020, new MPs from different parties have also been supported through TSoP’s new Parliamentary Academy, and this relationship with TSoP has continued through regular couscous politiques,- where TSoP alumni from all political parties continue to meet and informally discuss political issues over a traditional dinner. For Nabil, the connections he has been able to make through TSoP, and maintain through the couscous politiques and Parliamentary Academy, are invaluable to his political career. Very recently, for example, a friend he had made through TSoP, who works in a minister's office, acted as an intermediary to help Nabil with a project he was working on. He could count on her help, even though she is part of a competing party. “If the trust is there, then the human connection we made through TSoP helps to overcome partisan conflicts and to streamline our work.”⁸³

CEMI
The Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) is an NIMD partner led by Ahmed Driss. It is a think-tank based in Tunis. In a consortium with Demo Finland and NIMD, it runs TSoP (Tunis School of Politics) and facilitates the related inter-party dialogue platform. It builds capacities of politicians to increase their effectiveness and support the inclusiveness of Tunisian political parties in a multiparty setting.

MySoP in Myanmar: Informal exchanges on political issues between MySoP graduates“

Evaluated result

“After a year from the start of the [inter-party dialogue platform], members of the [platform] who are MySoP alumni exchange information informally and to seek advice from each other on topical issues independently from the programme activities. The participants are members of political parties, with opposing views on politics, with a dominant political culture of distrust among various actors. By exchanging information informally, the [platform] members enlarge their network with other parties, and understand more diverse ethnic identities, cultures, and values. MPs from the [inter-party dialogue platform] can gather inputs from different parties, different areas and ethnic groups of Shan State and apply these for their decision-making and discussions in parliament.”

MySoP
The Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) is a joint program of NIMD and Political Parties of Finland for Democracy (Demo Finland) led by Htet Oo Wai. MySoP focuses on strengthening the democratic role of politicians and political parties at the regional level, and enhancing the practice of political party dialogue.

Evaluated contribution

“[It] has become a place where trust and dialogue culture among participants is fostered. MySoP’s contributions to this include the long-term orientation of the support, flexibility, and needs-based assistance provided to the platform. Further, MySoP’s participant-centred approach, including creating

⁸² FIAN Consulting Oy, 2021: p. 16: 524 - 16: 827)
⁸³ NIMD, 2020.

time for relationship development led to MDP participants experiencing ice-breaking and unprecedented friendly relationships among different parties”.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ MDF, 2021: p. 20: 765 - 20: 2089.

5.5 Dialogue assistance

Defining dialogue assistance

In some cases, political dialogues are already set up by state actors. Usually upon invitation of the organizing party, NIMD supports such dialogue processes by contributing its dialogue experts and facilitators, technical expertise on dialogue facilitation, thematic expertise, or new research on policy-relevant topics.

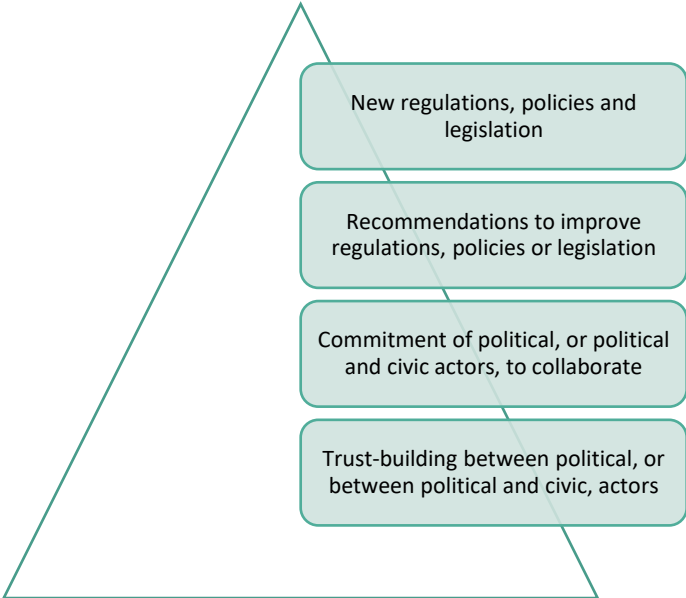
Expected results

The expected results of the dialogue is fully dependent on the goals of the organizing body, but can include trust-building between political or political and civic actors, commitments to collaborate, shared recommendations to improve regulations, policies, or legislation, and newly adopted regulations, policies, or legislation.

Countries

Over the past five years, NIMD supported ongoing political dialogue processes o.a. in

- Benin
- Burundi
- Colombia
- El Salvador
- Ethiopia
- Honduras
- Kenya
- Mali
- Uganda



Evidence of dialogue assistance results

NIMD Ethiopia: Supporting the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia

Introduction

The overall objective of NIMD's programme is to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Ethiopia. To this end, we work at two levels – the national and regional state levels. The programme currently operates in one state legislature, Caffee Oromiya, and there are plans to expand to other states as our work takes root. Currently, we have capacity-building programmes running with the National Parliament, Caffee Oromia, regional assemblies, and the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), as well as Ethiopia's political parties themselves. The programme was evaluated in 2020, before the events leading to the war in Tigray.

Evaluated result

"Signing MoU with NEBE in May 2018, after signing MoUs with parliaments in January 2017 has marked an official start of the SP programme targeting political parties. Signing MoUs is the main achievement, considering that NIMD is the only CSO working on politics that has such MoU in Ethiopia."⁸⁵

"After a thorough discussion, in August 2019 parliament approved the revised Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics Law. NIMD's contributions to the revision and approval of the revised Ethiopian Election, Political Parties Registration, and Election Ethics law are manifold."⁸⁶

NIMD Ethiopia

NIMD Ethiopia is led by Selamawit Menkir. The programme started in 2017 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Parliament and NIMD, as well as an MOU between NIMD and the Oromia Regional State legislature.

Evaluated contribution

"The basis of the [NIMD] 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 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."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ MDF, 2018: 196.

⁸⁶ MDF, 2020: 27: 2370 - 28: 900.

⁸⁷ MDF, 2020: 27: 2370 - 28: 900.

“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.”⁸⁸

NIMD Mali: Supporting dialogue with critical research

Evaluated result

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

Evaluated contribution

“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.”⁸⁹

NIMD Mali

The NIMD programme in Mali started with the set-up of an independent political party dialogue platform in 2008: the Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Interpartis et la Démocratie (CMDID). As of 2018, NIMD has established its own office in Bamako. It is currently led by Ibrahim Maïga. The focus has shifted from an emphasis on political party dialogue to supporting increased inclusivity and accountability in policy making.

“Between May and October 2019, the NIMD carried out a study on the costs of electoral campaigns and elective mandates in Mali. The study made it possible to identify, in a practical way, the general panorama of the sources of financing of candidates and political parties. It also determined the effect of money on representation and legitimacy in the Malian political system. The results of this study, published in October 2019, a few weeks before the inclusive national dialogue, contributed to the public debate on the issue. Eventually, this issue was selected as one of the priorities in the package of political reforms needed for the country.”⁹⁰

⁸⁸ MDF, 2020: 30: 472 - 30: 2278.

⁸⁹ MDF, 2020.

⁹⁰ MDF, 2020: Annex 3: 172.

“In May 2019, a study was conducted by NIMD on electoral reforms in Mali. Following this study, a high-level workshop was organised on political reforms. It brought together the entire political class as well as civil society actors. A follow-up committee was set up at the end of the workshop. It was composed of members of the majority, the opposition and civil society, who decided to work voluntarily and independently to monitor and advocate electoral reforms to be carried out in Mali. The commission is effective and has participated in the first national symposium on political and institutional reforms in Mali, as well as the national inclusive dialogue. Before the commission was set up, political and civil actors were talking about the need for electoral reforms in Mali, but they were not organised and structured. This committee has helped structure and adopts an inclusive method, which then became a platform to advocate for reforms.”⁹¹

⁹¹ MDF, 2020: Annex 3 : 157.

6. Main lessons learned

This report resulted in important lessons for NIMD. All the lessons NIMD needs to take into account are summarized below separately for dialogue practitioners, evaluators, and donors. This chapter closes with questions to support continued learning on NIMD's core approach of political dialogue.

6.1 For dialogue practitioners

- There is **decreasing space** to maintain NIMD's traditional dialogue intervention of institutionalized and long-term inter-party dialogue platforms. Therefore, the current development in the NIMD network of innovating and **moving towards five signature dialogue interventions** is crucial to be able to continue to work in increasingly protracted and complex political contexts.
- NIMD's **guiding principle of impartiality** continues to be one of the most crucial principles, and significantly influences the success of our dialogue interventions. Any innovation to NIMD's dialogue approach should not encroach upon this principle.
- NIMD's emphasis on **trust-building with its target groups** continues to have a very strong positive influence on the results of our dialogue interventions. The role of NIMD and partner staff in that process cannot be overstated, and needs the continued attention and investment.
- NIMD's long-time practice of linking its dialogue interventions with other **capacity-building interventions** continues to be one of the strongest incentives NIMD can create to get political actors to join the dialogue table.
- We need to continue with **flexible programming** to be able to switch between different dialogue innovations and linked capacity-building interventions that make the best use of opportunities in the political incentive structure.
- The current **democratic backslide** severely impacts on our dialogue interventions, and this means that we need to (even better) understand the conditions under which we can still expect to reach results, and under which conditions we cannot.
- Given the increasingly constrained political contexts, NIMD needs an **start and exit strategy** for its dialogue work, which includes a decision on when and how long it is willing to temporarily switch to capacity-building only and postpone its dialogue interventions when the political context forces us to.

6.2 For dialogue evaluators

- We need to better understand the ways in which NIMD's guiding principle of **inclusivity**, understood as inclusion of marginalized groups in dialogue, influences the results of our dialogue interventions.
- We need external evaluators to **focus more on 'failures'** and non-events for us to better understand the conditions under which our dialogue interventions work best.

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- ✦ To keep pace with the innovations in the NIMD network, our external evaluators need to focus more specifically on the results, and **enabling and disabling factors** separately for each of our signature dialogue interventions.
 - ✦ To keep pace with contextual changes, and to understand how they affect our political dialogues, external evaluators need to evaluate **longer time frames**, and consistently cover the same country programmes at mid-term and end-line evaluations.

6.3 For dialogue donors

- ✦ When it comes to dialogue, **funding staff time** is as, or perhaps even more, important as funding separate dialogue activities. The quality and results of our dialogue work are strongly influenced by the quality of our staff. They build the trust with, and between, the target groups, which is crucial to be able to facilitate the actual dialogue itself.
- ✦ Numeric indicators do not always say everything about actual dialogue results. Indicator measurements provide useful information on the reach, scope, and quality of the dialogue (i.e. how many parties join, how often do they meet, what topics do they discuss), but additional **qualitative monitoring and evaluation approaches**, including combining contribution analyses with Outcome Harvesting, are needed to provide appropriately rigorous and independent assessments of outcomes and effectiveness.
- ✦ We need to engage donors to support **evidence gap mapping** evaluation exercises. These create a better overview of knowledge on what works and what does not, especially for multiple interventions in different donor-funded frameworks.

6.4 Questions for future learning

- ✦ Under which conditions are each of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions most effective?
- ✦ Under which conditions are each of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions least effective?
- ✦ Under which conditions can we consider the potential results of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions as satisfactory in and of themselves (i.e. trust-building; commitments to collaborate; recommendations to improve policies and legislation; adopted policies and legislation)?
- ✦ Under which conditions should we expect not to be able to reach results for each of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions?
- ✦ How does inclusiveness, understood as inclusion of marginalized groups, influence the processes and results of each of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions?
- ✦ How does single-party dominance influence the processes and results of each of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions?
- ✦ How do electoral cycles influence the processes and results of each of NIMD's signature dialogue interventions?

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- How does the combination of political and civic actors in multi-stakeholder dialogues influence the processes and results, as compared to political party or political actor dialogues?
 - How do NIMD's signature dialogue interventions strengthen one another?

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