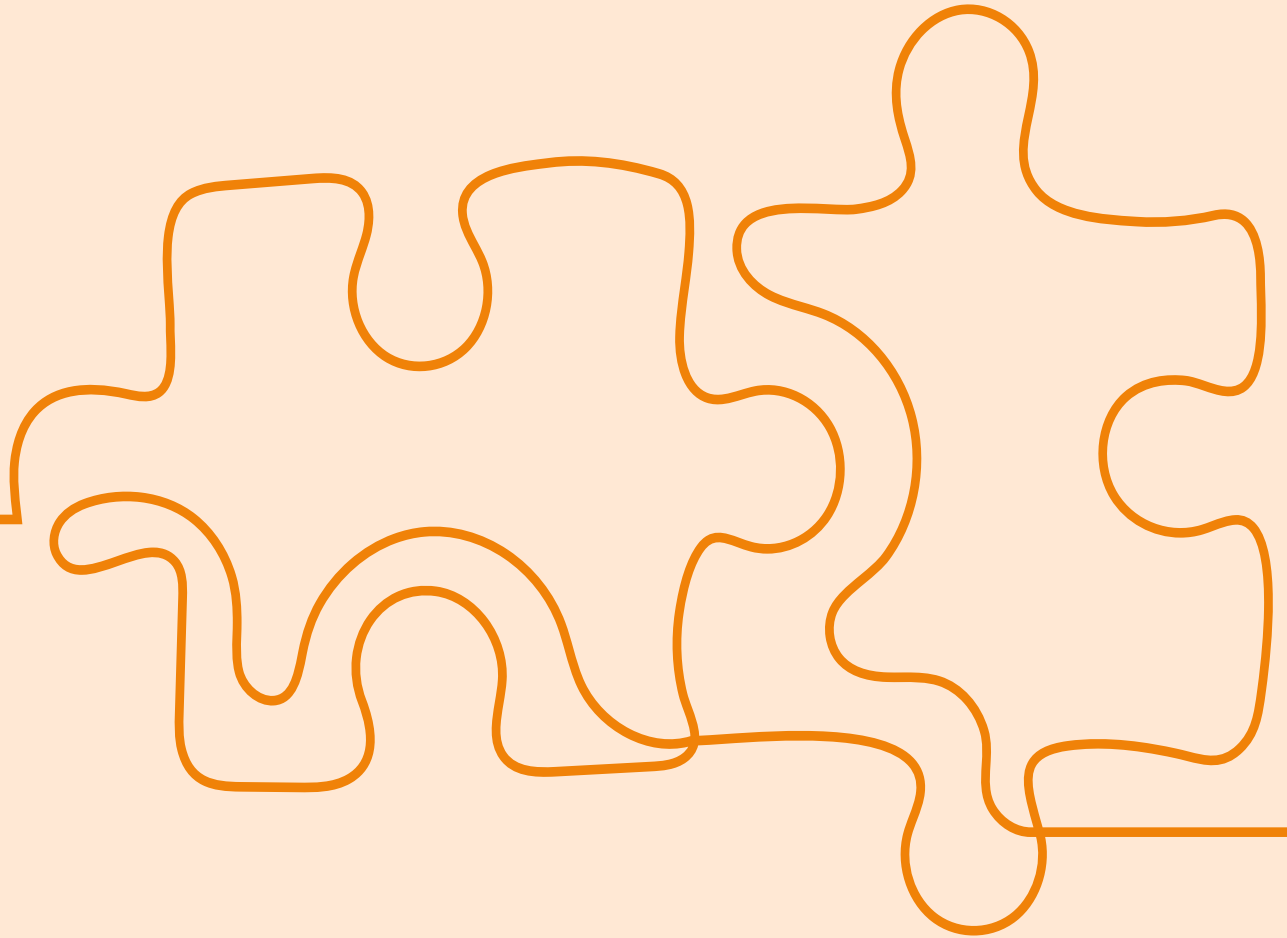


# COUNTERING POLARIZATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



Netherlands Institute for  
**Multiparty Democracy**

# CONTENTS



**MESSAGE FROM  
OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



**NIMD IN 2023**



**COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS**



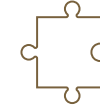
**BUILDING TRUST THROUGH  
DIALOGUE IN SINT EUSTATIUS**



**DIALOGUE**



**DEMOCRACY EDUCATION**



**WOMEN'S POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION**



**YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**



**STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC  
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**YOU NEED ONE TO DO THE OTHER:  
USING HOLISTIC THINKING TO  
BUILD BRIDGES IN KENYA**



**NIMD'S COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY,  
INTEGRITY AND OUR PEOPLE**



**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page



## MESSAGE FROM THIJS BERMAN NIMD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2023, as in the two previous years, NIMD has seen sustained growth of the organization. Today, we work in 20 countries, with an unprecedented budget and an equally impressive number of contracts with a diverse array of funding partners. This speaks for the reputation of NIMD and the confidence our organization enjoys worldwide. It also shows how funding partners such as the EU, UN and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs turn to NIMD in their strategic choice to invest in the support of democracy, in a context of backsliding democracies and clearly autocratic developments.

In many countries where we support democracy, polarization and deep mistrust characterize the political sphere. We observe the same deepening mistrust among many citizens towards their political leaders, and even towards their democratic institutions. Polls consistently show how, in many NIMD programme countries, an impressive majority of citizens invariably believe in democracy. However, many are exasperated about their politicians after decades of bad governance and neglect of the needs of the most vulnerable. Social media deepens the divides, as their algorithms tend to boost antagonizing messages. But these divides existed long before the digital era. They are marked by social inequality and other perceived or real differences between groups. Insecurity, a lack of opportunities and a lower life expectancy hit the poorest and marginalized people first.



Democracy will thrive when people are confident that there is hope for a better future with fair opportunities for them and their children. Inversely, a better future for all will not be realized without a functioning democracy where the full diversity of interests is served honestly, with agreed solutions reached through dialogue. Today, it is precisely the space for dialogue that seems to be shrinking.

This is why, more than ever, NIMD supports dialogue between political actors, and between politicians and their populations. Beyond our support to strengthen democratic institutions, beyond our training of young and aspiring politicians in our Democracy Schools, we build bridges between people. We do this in bigger and smaller countries, from Kenya to the tiny Caribbean Island of St. Eustatius within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In this annual report, we highlight the stories from our network. Our work is only possible thanks to the deep personal commitment of our colleagues, from Nairobi to Oranjestad and affects them, just as dialogue will change those who choose to listen to others with openness, share their interests and beliefs, find common ground and build their future together.

In our Democracy Schools, NIMD works with young and aspiring politicians who understand the need for dialogue. This implies a new form of democratic leadership, no longer in the style of the rather top-down leaders of the 20th century, eager to explain their blueprint for the future but less equipped to design the blueprint together with citizens. Our young leaders are from the Internet generation, networking on an equal footing. They are ready to expose their vision, strong beliefs, doubts, ambition and openness to work with others. Their first steps in politics are guided by the slogan of NIMD: democracy starts with dialogue.

To all colleagues and partners who make this work possible, I wish to express my deepest gratitude.

Thijs Berman  
Executive Director NIMD



# NIMD IN 2023

In 2023, NIMD implemented 20 programmes across Africa, Latin America, the Middle East region, the Dutch Caribbean, and Central and Southeast Asia.



## Armenia

In early 2023, NIMD started its exploration in Armenia, holding meetings with political actors, international donors, civil society organizations across the country. These meetings included discussions with Members of Parliament from the three parliamentary parties as well as nine non-parliamentary parties from across the political spectrum.

Following our exploration and aligning with the current needs of the country, NIMD decided to set up the Armenia Multiparty Democracy Academy together with our Yerevan based partner [OxYGen](#). The academy targeted 25 civic and political inspired young men and women from political parties and NGOs. Later in 2023 NIMD hired a country representative and opened an office in Armenia.

## Benin

Throughout 2023 in Benin, NIMD facilitated exchange and learning sessions between its staff and long-time partner, the [Institut pour la Gouvernance Démocratique](#) (IGD), bolstering the latter's capacity and enhancing the political party dialogue component. Together with IGD and the government institute Mediateur de la Republique, NIMD also successfully launched the REFAIRE project to foster a conducive environment for resolving electoral conflicts.

## Burkina Faso

In 2023, NIMD implemented a political decision-making project for women and girl leaders in Burkina Faso. The project trained thirty women leaders and potential candidates for the upcoming elections. As a result, virtual platforms (Facebook and WhatsApp) were created to encourage political discussions among women and to motivate them to get involved in politics in different regions. Additionally, in the commune of Koudougou, a request was made for women and girls to participate more actively in the decision-making bodies of the special delegation that serves as the town hall. This request was following the dissolution of the local executive in January and September 2022 due to the two coup d'états.

## Burundi

Working since 2008 in Burundi alongside our long-standing partner the [Burundi Leadership Training Program \(BLTP\)](#), in 2023 NIMD made big strides in Burundi, establishing a local office. We hired local staff who oversee ongoing projects and build connections between different political institutions in Burundi. We look forward to expanding our work in Burundi on alleviating distrust, fostering collaboration and dialogue across party lines, and encouraging a future generation of democratic leaders.

## Colombia

In 2023, [NIMD Colombia](#) consolidated the District Multiparty Gender Roundtable. During the last two years, the roundtable group has strengthened its internal governance processes. It has materialized different actions in its action plan through collaborative work between the representatives of each political party and movement. Together with other organizations, the District Multiparty Gender Roundtable promoted the signing of the "letter of commitment between political parties and movements to equality and non-discrimination" to promote women's political participation in an environment free of violence in their political organizations. 18 political organizations signed the letter.

## El Salvador

In 2023, in El Salvador, NIMD hosted a regional boot camp for 20 young people from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The young people from Honduras and El Salvador were activists, social leaders, and human rights defenders, while young people from Guatemala and political parties participated. The objective was to reflect on safeguarding civic space in the region and the collective construction of actions to this end.

In line with further strengthening regional ties, NIMD El Salvador held a workshop on self-care and resilience with members of the Central American Parliament at the Parliament's headquarters in Guatemala City, with the participation of deputies from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

## Ethiopia

One significant accomplishment in 2023 was the development of the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance, and Elections (BRIDGE) mobile application for the Caffee (Parliament). This interactive app is designed to enhance democratic governance and constituent engagement. It allows citizens to access profiles of all 504 Members of Parliament, communicate with them directly, and provide feedback on parliamentary activities. The app also serves as an information hub with features like a repository for parliamentary reports and minutes of meetings. The question and answer feature included in the application is expected to increase citizen involvement in the legislative process.

## Guatemala

2023 was a [pivotal election year for Guatemala](#). NIMD Guatemala's activities focused on the context of elections, including civic education for conscious and informed voting, campaigns to call for the registration of young people, electoral dialogues and the preparation of citizen agendas to deliver to elected politicians (district deputies and mayors). A few alumni of the Multiparty Youth Diploma - a subset of the Democracy School - and staff (teachers and municipal facilitators) also ran as candidates for deputies and mayors in the 2023 elections, showing the quality of the programme as well as of the people involved in our training and our work.

## Honduras

In 2023, NIMD Honduras worked with the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) of the National Congress to promote electoral reforms in Honduras. NIMD facilitated four regional roundtables to analyze the electoral reforms needed ahead of the next general elections in 2025. The roundtables took place in the cities of La Ceiba, Choluteca, San Pedro Sula, and Tegucigalpa with the participation of representatives of Honduran political parties, civil society, EAC board members and local leaders. NIMD Honduras later handed over the systematization document to Congressman Rasel Tomé, president of the EAC. The document gathered all the contributions of the people who participated in this process and the recommendations for its follow-up.

## Iraq

In 2023, NIMD collaborated with the Women Empowerment Organization, our partner in Iraq, to enhance the capabilities of 25 youth members hailing from various political parties, civil society organizations, and political movements across the country. This was achieved through the Iraqi School of Democracy. The programme focused on imparting knowledge related to social contract theories and participatory democracy mechanisms, while also developing skills like leadership, networking, and public speaking. Participants had the opportunity to interact with former school members, thereby creating a robust alumni network.

## Jordan

In 2023, NIMD adopted a new approach to its dialogue interventions in Jordan. We extended our activities to the local governance level and partnered with youth and women-led CSOs in Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa. This partnership resulted in a diversification of the groups NIMD reached, with around 300 participants attending our dialogue activities, and a greater variety of topics discussed, including local development priorities such as health, education, and cultural activities. The outcome of the discussions, as well as the visions of the CSOs surrounding these topics, were later presented by the CSO members in dialogue sessions with relevant officials at the local level.

## Kenya

Whilst only setting up an official office in late 2022, NIMD Kenya quickly highlighted NIMD's dedication to fostering inclusive political participation. As, in 2023, NIMD launched the first sessions of the Kenya Democracy Academy, in collaboration with the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) and the Kenya Young Parliamentarians Association (KYPA). This Academy is exclusively for Members of Parliament and is designed to promote democratic principles among both newly elected and experienced Members.



## Mali

In 2023, despite the challenging circumstances in Mali following the quick successions of coups d'état in 2020 and 2021, we persisted in our efforts to engage the youth in promoting a sustainable and inclusive democracy.

NIMD Mali created an impactful and captivating graphic novel that explains the workings of democracy, highlights its crucial components, and encourages the youth to play an active role.

## Mozambique

In 2023, together with our longstanding partner, the Institute for Multiparty Democracy Mozambique (IMD Mozambique), we supported Mozambican political parties in developing campaign manifestos that also considered the needs of women, youth, and other structurally excluded groups. In preparation for the municipal elections in 2023, IMD also hosted a training on developing manifestos where 13 political parties attended, all of them did not have manifestos previously.

## Myanmar

Despite the persisting challenges, NIMD's initiatives in 2023 in Myanmar had a significant impact. Three Democracy School trainings were held, engaging 51 politicians and human rights defenders. We also organized issue-based learning seminars with around 90 politicians, further contributing to fostering a cooperative political environment in Myanmar. The NIMD MyDemocracy School app, which was launched at the start of 2023, received active engagement, with 520 users actively utilizing the platform.

## Niger

Niger in 2023 was met with an unexpected coup d'état. The office, however, adapted the projects to the changing climate. Prior to the coup d'état, NIMD Niger was implementing the Présimètre, a survey tool aimed at monitoring the engagement of women and youth in society. The report was scheduled for release in July 2023, but the forum was cancelled due to the coup d'état in July. In response, the team pivoted and conducted an opinion poll among the citizens to gauge their perceptions on the coup d'état and the prospects for a successful transition. The team managed to get 542 people to participate in the survey, and the results were debated at two separate conferences that were attended by over 300 people.

## Sint Eustatius

In 2023, the Political Dialogue Platform of Sint Eustatius (PDPS), served as a safe and appreciated space for the political representatives of Sint Eustatius to build trust among each other and discuss sensitive or contentious topics. The platform, facilitated by NIMD, played a crucial role in the sustainable return of the budget right to the local Island Council by the Dutch Government, which was a significant step in the return to local democratic decision-making structures. This highlights the importance of NIMD's dialogue work in promoting multi-party collaboration and preparing decision-making at the regional and national levels.

## Somaliland

The NIMD Somaliland Office celebrated its official registration in March 2023. Hitting the ground running, the team held the first out of five BRIDGE training sessions, which aimed to train 20 electoral stakeholders from Somaliland and Ethiopia to become facilitators. The following four BRIDGE trainings in 2023 focused on Media and Elections, Civic and Voter Education, Gender and Elections, and Introduction to Electoral Administration. The BRIDGE trainings were a start in strengthening the institutional capacity in Somaliland to ensure long-term stability and fostering trust in the political system.

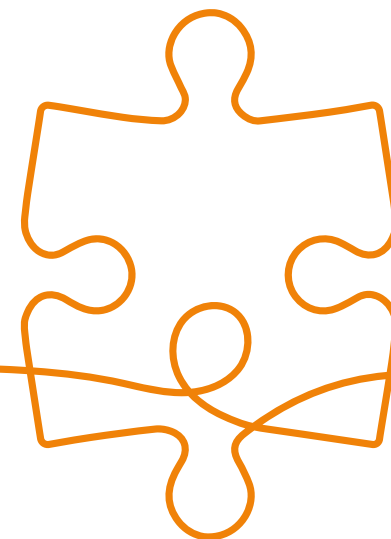


## Uganda

NIMD Uganda in 2023 enjoyed its inaugural Democracy Academy launch. With a focus on young politicians and youth platforms, the Academy brought together 38 students from across the political spectrum. The graduation ceremony of the Academy coincided with the celebration of International Democracy Day, and what stood out during the ceremony was a sense of togetherness and trust. During the ceremony, the students highlighted the space that the Academy created to come together for the first time and discuss common concerns and the future of democracy in Uganda.

## Venezuela

In 2023, NIMD Venezuela managed to consolidate the network of feminist leaders from political, civic and academic society. NIMD is providing a safe space for women leaders to come together, exchange information and jointly support and further the space for women in (political) decision-making.





# Overcoming political differences for a common goal in Sint Eustatius



It was never really for them a plan, or their intention, to enter politics. But it was a culmination of events that led Rechelline Leerdam, and later Raquel Spanner-Carty to be at the epicenter of political life when communication broke down completely between the political leaders of Sint Eustatius. An island nestled between the islands of Sint Maarten and Saba, forming the SSS-islands of the Dutch Caribbean. The two women politicians Rechelline, leader of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and Raquel, leader of the opposition party – the Democratic Party (DP), would come to play indispensable roles in bringing the different political representatives of Sint Eustatius back together through the implementation and later success of the NIMD-facilitated Political Dialogue Platform Statia (PDPS).

After over half a year of tentatively restoring the lines of communication through the Dialogue platform, the parties presented the initiative and its impressive progress during a [town hall meeting](#) with the citizens of Sint Eustatius on 17 August 2023. But with the history of political clashes in the back of their minds, the citizens were not immediately convinced. “They thought this is, not fake, but a fairy tale,” Rechelline shares, “like a play.” Raquel echoes this sentiment and says that “they did not see it as real.”

While the history of political clashes internally as well as towards the Dutch National Government dated a while back, they culminated after 2018 when the Dutch government took unprecedented action on the island. The national Government dissolved the islands democratic institutions. They aimed to bring about reforms to the island, however, the move was met with mixed reactions, also within Statia's different political parties.





The strain that the intervention brought to the island culminated in 2022 where all communication between political representatives broke down. The political parties had to make collective decisions in the [Island council](#) – the highest administrative body of the island - but could simply not work together, “it was really bad, we were not making any decisions and the island did not need this clashing at the time.” Rechelline, part of the island council since 2015, shares that she realized it would be necessary to find a new solution to the breakdown of communication and increased polarization between the political parties. Following a mediation process it became clear that an alternative would have to be found to maintain the lines of communication and avoid another breakdown and “so that is why I asked NIMD’s help.”

If I would explain what Dialogue is, “I think our facilitator explained it best. It gives us a space where we can discuss matters that are relevant but in a different way,” says Raquel. She added that “the dialogue platform gives you the space to be a different person, not fake, but you can be less of a politician for a moment and focus on the dialogue and who you have in front of you.”

Rechelline responded, “I subscribe to what she says, I would emphasize the creation of a safe space. If I disagree with my party member in the dialogue platform, I know that it will not appear on the radio or in the media by the opposition, or vice versa.” In short, what happens in the dialogue platform - stays in the dialogue platform.



Photo: Raquel and Rechelline at the table with the island council on the immediate and third left, with Nilda at the head of the table.



## **But creating a space that feels so safe to all members is not an easy task, how do you get everyone on board?**

“Trust is not something you build in a day, but Sint-Maarten based, NIMD expert, Dr. Nilda Arduin played a very important role in this, interviewing everyone beforehand to hear their expectations. She was realistic as well, not painting a rosy picture. She said it is our platform, if we did not participate based off our histories then we will never get anywhere,” says Raquel.

But “not everyone was as eager,” says Rechelline, “one member was particularly reluctant first about the dialogue platform. But now he is glad to be on board and is very active. Getting people like that on board was only possible through having those discussions, reiteration, and changing our perspective by showing us the possibilities of the platform.”

## **“Differences are obvious, but the dialogue platform enabled us to also see what we have in common.” Raquel**

“The dialogue platform really worked. We were able to start coming together and making decisions,” says Rechelline, Raquel adds that “the idea that we all get along now, and it is a bed of roses is not at all what we were trying to portray during the town hall to the citizens. What we wanted to portray was the truth. We are trying to work together in the interest of our people and trying to find common ground.”

They share that the political clashing is still there, but different. “We have learnt to discuss in a different manner. We have learnt to focus on issues and not be in constant strife with one another,” Raquel says. Rechelline agrees, adding that “I realize now that the opposition has some good points. Previously policies or points coming in from the opposition would be ‘dead on arrival,’ but now we approach it differently, what does the opposition have to say? Now we can have a conducive dialogue and perhaps find a way in which we can both support the issue and go out as a united front. **We are facing a lot of different issues on our island, and it does not make sense to be divided on these issues.**”

The latter is an integral part of a functioning democracy. At NIMD we believe that dialogue is not about getting everyone to agree on everything, but it is finding common ground and finding a common goal to work towards.

In the near future, the parties will face their next challenge. Looming on the horizon is the reinstatement of the democratic state, with which will come the appointment of a new governor on 1 April 2024. Raquel and Rechelline both foresee challenges, maintaining communication and the agreements on how to communicate made during the dialogue platform sessions. “Now we have to take over the platform, Nilda cannot be there forever, we have to continue the dialogue process and own it ourselves,” says Rechelline.

The motivation for both women is the next generation. There is a sense of responsibility in ensuring that the practice of dialogue continues after them, passing on the torch so to speak. The importance of continuing the dialogue process is to ensure that the trust with the citizens is slowly but surely rebuilt, so they no longer ask, is this real?





## Our Themes

At NIMD, our programming aims to strengthen the political infrastructure and embed democratic traditions, building resilience and flexibility in political systems that will help foster long term stability and prevent conflict and polarization.

At the heart of all our work is trust building: We strive to build and strengthen the relationships between different political actors and institutions and the country's citizens to counter polarization and ensure meaningful cooperation to build inclusive and sustainable democracies.

Democracy can also only thrive when all voices are heard, and inclusive and respectful dialogue between politicians, political parties, civil society and citizens is crucial to achieving that goal. NIMD's work broadly falls into five categories – Dialogue, Democracy Education, Women's Political Participation, Youth Political Participation and Strengthening Democratic Infrastructure. We are proud to present our highlights from 2023 for each of these categories.





## Our Approach

At NIMD, we believe that democracy starts with dialogue; that dialogue has the power to foster the trust, collaboration and consensus that form the foundation of a respectful democratic culture. Through our five signature dialogue interventions, we facilitate a range of initiatives, from political party dialogues to multi-stakeholder dialogues that gather diverse groups with a stake in the political process. Each of the dialogues aim to bring people together across divides to work towards the common good of the country.

Find out more about our approach to dialogue at <https://nimd.org/what-we-do/dialogue/>

"NIMD in 2023 was able to grow its dialogue work. This because our dialogue experts like improvisation jazz musicians, they are highly skilled and experienced, while simultaneously having the courage to stray off the beaten path. This makes them creative and able to improvise. Even under difficult conditions. These qualities together are what ensures excellent dialogue design and facilitation."

Violet Benneker, NIMD Dialogue Lead

# Dialogue

## Our work in 2023:

In 2023 at NIMD we were able to just talk, using the [Just Talk](#) framework that we published in 2022, looking at how to move forward with our dialogue interventions in a way that takes into account the fast-changing contexts. After stepping back from some of our dialogue interventions in 2021 - due to a spike in repression and violence - in 2023 we were once again expanding on all NIMD's dialogue interventions. In 2023, some of the highlights of our work include:

- Supporting multiple dialogue interventions in our programme countries. In Ethiopia for example, we started up our inter-generational political party dialogue, we provided technical assistance in Kenya to a national-level dialogue platform, we also set up a new political actor dialogue platform at the municipal level in Sint Eustatius, and facilitated several multi-stakeholder dialogues in Colombia and El Salvador at the municipal level.
- Continuing to innovate our dialogue interventions. Within our signature political party dialogue intervention, we now also facilitate intergenerational political party dialogue - bringing together young people and senior leadership from different political parties. This innovation was developed by NIMD Ethiopia. The joint effort resulted in a new methodology for this specific dialogue intervention, which is available to support everyone in the network
- Setting up of the Boabab network, a global network of NIMD dialogue facilitators and experts, who support each other with mutual learning and exchange. Our first step was getting together a Steering Group of seven experienced dialogue experts from all over the world.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page



## Dialogue in numbers:

Number of political parties  
participating:

**216**

Number of dialogue  
meetings held:

**230**

Number of civil society  
organizations participating in the  
dialogue activities:

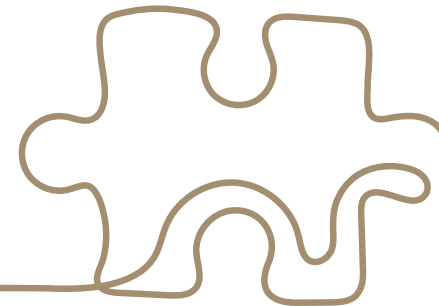
**1007**

Number of legislative  
proposals developed:

**86**

## Building on our activities in 2023 and looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to:

- Sow the seeds that were planted in 2023 for the Baobab network. In 2024, we will invite new dialogue experts as members and organize a mentorship training for the current dialogue experts to become mentors so that they can provide mentorship to new facilitators. In this context we will also organize more peer-to-peer exchanges between our dialogue experts to further strengthen the Baobab network.
- We will continue to capture and support the roll-out of dialogue innovations across the network. For example, by organizing inter-generational political party dialogues in different countries and capturing the best practices and lessons learned to further improve our work.





## Our Approach

At NIMD, we support politicians and aspiring politicians to develop their skills and knowledge through a variety of training programmes, courses and initiatives, including our renowned Democracy Schools. By bringing participants together from across the political and ideological spectrum, these initiatives ensure lasting networks and connections that bridge divides and build trust, helping combat polarization and ensuring democratic values have a chance to thrive.

Find out more about our approach to Democracy Education at <https://nimd.org/what-we-do/democracy-education/>

"I think what is clear from 2023 it that democracy education is becoming more popular, not only within the funding partner sphere but also from the students. We have seen a rise in demand for Schools, a trend that we very much look forward to exploring further."

Reem Judeh, NIMD Democracy Education Lead

# Democracy Education

## Our work in 2023:

In 2023, we witnessed a notable trend of increased reputation, leading to a corresponding surge in demand for our work, such as the introduction of Democracy Schools in four new NIMD programme countries. Despite continued democratic backsliding, we persist in our efforts, using Democracy Schools to strengthen political actors and advance democratic values. In 2023, some of the highlights of our work include:

- The establishment of multiple new Democracy Schools across the network. In Somaliland and Armenia - NIMD's two new programme countries - where the Democracy Academies operate as a tool for trust building between diverse political actors. As well as in our long-standing programme countries of Kenya and Uganda who both held their first Democracy Schools, each school tailored to the local context.
- The facilitation of south-to-south mutual learning and exchange around Democracy Education. Where NIMD Country Directors from Kenya, Somaliland, and Uganda visited the Ethiopian Democracy Academy, immersing themselves in their programmes and drawing invaluable insights to inform the establishment and setup of their own Schools.
- We devoted significant efforts to updating and harmonizing NIMD's guidelines for establishing Democracy Schools, ensuring consistency and efficacy across our programmes.
- We developed an internal paper on Democracy Education for the country offices and partners to showcase our numerous Democracy Education interventions, alongside the Schools.
- We conducted an extensive tracer study in 2023 which tracked the impact of NIMD's Democracy Schools on a global scale, surveying 3500 Democracy School alumni. The findings revealed that 68% of alumni reported increased respect for individuals with differing values, while 84% experienced positive changes in tolerance towards minorities and lower classes. One of the major lessons learned was that NIMD's unique emphasis on trust-building continues to have a very strong positive influence on the results of our Democracy Schools.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page





## Democracy Education in numbers:

Number of graduates

**1858**

Number of countries with  
Democracy Schools:

**14**

## Building on our activities in 2023 and looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to:

- Finalize a new Training of Trainers that reflects NIMD's inclusive and diverse approach to Democracy Education.
- Investigate producing manuals for cross-cutting themes, such as how to use the Democracy School as a tool to aid in fostering responsive political actors.
- Continue to facilitate exchanges between the country offices and allow for best practices and lessons learned to be shared to continuously improve our Democracy Education approach and implementation at NIMD.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page







# Women's Political Participation

## Our work in 2023:

At NIMD, we have long been committed to promoting the participation of women in politics. In 2023, some of the highlights of our work include:

- Continuing to support women-led organizations to participate meaningfully in peace processes. A case in point is Guatemala, where we supported the women-led initiative AMUTED, which created and promoted networks and alliances of indigenous women taking a role in peace building processes, protecting the environment, and gender equity in their territories.
- We started documenting and sharing experiences of work being done by female peacebuilders around the world. In 2023, we focused on Latin America, particularly on Venezuela, Guatemala, and Colombia, where female leaders share their experience, what worked and what didn't, lessons they learnt along the way, and how to move forward with the 1325 agenda in the region.
- In our gender mainstreaming efforts, Democracy Schools in Uganda have included a gender sensitive curriculum and gender balanced facilitation. In Guatemala, the Democracy School and other educational programmes have a module on gender and intersectionality. These efforts aim to reflect on key issues related to gendered politics, and the complex relationship between power, gender, and politics.
- In Myanmar, we managed to establish a women peace ambassador network, where women peace builders come together to exchange knowledge and collectively learn how to utilize dialogue tools in addressing women, peace, and security issues and promote women leadership in Myanmar.



## Our Approach

At NIMD, we know that the inclusion of women in political processes, as other underrepresented groups, is key to an inclusive democracy. Women, in all their diversity, must have the chance to exercise their political rights and meaningfully participate in all political decision-making. To achieve our goals, we work with political and civil society actors to foster an open political culture.

Find out more about our approach to Women's Political Participation at <https://nimd.org/what-we-do/womens-political-participation/>

"With women making up over 50% of the population - in most contexts - it is vital that women actively and meaningfully participate in politics and decision-making processes. But in our work, we look further than the numbers. Our approach is multi-layered - looking at the gendered issues in politics to remove obstacles to women's access and meaningful participation."

Floortje Klijn, NIMD Women's Political Participation Lead



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page



## Women's Political Participation in numbers:

Number of women trained in political skills:

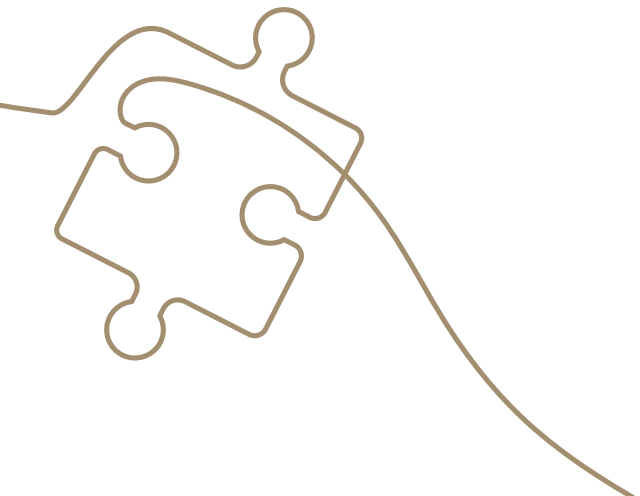
**2549**

Percentage of women graduates from our Democracy Schools:

**56%**

## Building on our activities in 2023 and looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to:

- Consolidate and further develop our Gender Strategy with tools and manuals to systematically apply a gender perspective across all our programmes, and particularly in the Political Economy Analysis methodology.
- Invest in a more comprehensive understanding of gendered-politics and how it affects underrepresented groups, focusing particularly on gender-based violence in politics.
- Continue supporting women-led organizations in peace processes around the world as part of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page





## Our Approach

Promoting the political potential of young people at every level of the decision-making process is crucial if states are to address the huge challenges the world is facing. At NIMD, youth participation is playing an increasingly central role in our programming, and we strive to find innovative ways to connect to a new generation of decision makers.

Find out more about our approach to Youth Political Participation at <https://nimd.org/what-we-do/youth-inclusivity/>

“We need a mindset shift. Labeling youth as the future delays their participation and inclusion in governance now.”

Roxanne van der Blik, NIMD Youth Political Participation Lead

# Youth Political Participation

## Our work in 2023:

Building upon the groundwork laid in 2022 on collecting lessons learned across our network, our efforts in 2023 were dedicated to further contributing to the active participation of all young people in society, regardless of their age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnic background. In 2023, some of the highlights of our work include:

- Prioritizing our internal learning and understanding of youth dynamics through several online learning events, facilitating knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices surrounding youth's role in politics. The themes addressed during these events ranged from advocacy and youth participation in Colombia to adapting Democracy Schools to be more youth-friendly, drawing lessons from experiences shared by NIMD Jordan and partner organization Centre of Mediterranean and international studies (CEMI).
- Facilitating a training session in Benin, focusing on fostering a youth-centric perspective in programming. The training being in line with our goal of bolstering youth's capacity in politics.
- Developing a knowledge product on youth political participation within the Power of Dialogue consortium. We delved into case studies from Burkina Faso, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Tunisia, and Uganda. Drawing from these case studies, we collected the common lessons learned across the network and hope to share our lessons learned in 2024.
- The development of a guide for inter-generational political party dialogue. The guide will serve as a comprehensive resource for initiating and executing dialogues that bridge generational divides within political spheres. This guide, informed by lessons acquired during our work in Ethiopia, represents a new intervention poised for further rollout in various NIMD programme countries in 2024.
- Further expanding and fortifying both our internal and external networks of engaged youth to facilitate mutual learning and help to strengthen the position of youth in politics.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page



## Youth Political Participation in numbers:

Percentage of Democracy School  
graduates under 35:

**62%**

## Building on our activities in 2023 and looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to:

- Refine our programming using past lessons learned to shape our youth strategy.
- Publish and share the Youth Knowledge Product, developed within the Power of Dialogue consortium on a global scale.
- Disseminate our guide to inter-generational dialogue both within and outside NIMD.
- Strengthen our capacity on the theme of youth in our country offices, including developing training modules, as well as in-country trainings following our successful Benin training in 2023.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page





## Our Approach

Across all our work at NIMD we aim to ensure that democratic institutions function effectively, and political actors can respond to the needs and interest of the population. With these requirements in place, countries can build a strong and resilient infrastructure that lays the foundation for truly inclusive and responsive democracy.

Find out more about our approach to Strengthening Democratic Infrastructure at <https://nimd.org/what-we-do/strengthening-democratic-infrastructure/>

"Effective representation (including a voice for citizens) and accountability of elected officials are some of the key ingredients necessary for any democracy to endure."

Tayuh Ngege, NIMD Strengthening Democratic Infrastructure Lead

# Strengthening Democratic Infrastructure

## Our work in 2023:

In 2023, we focussed on enhancing a culture of responsiveness, extending beyond individual actors to encompass broader institutional engagement. This reflects our commitment to fostering accountable, open, and inclusive connections between citizens and political entities, beyond election periods. In 2023, some of the highlights of our work include:

- Launching the Responsive Political Actors (RPA) framework paper, a comprehensive review of our initiatives – started in 2022. The review sought to elucidate the diverse ways in which NIMD supports political actors in their endeavours to be more responsive to citizens.
- A lively panel discussion during the internal partner week where the RPA framework paper was launched. During the discussion, experiences in designing and implementing initiatives for more responsive politics were exchanged. Insights gleaned from this discussion were later compiled into a best practices publication, contributing to enhanced knowledge dissemination within our network.
- The development of a spin-off lesson-learning note capturing experiences from Kenya, Niger, and Guatemala.
- Exploring the potential of leveraging technology to strengthen political actors' responsiveness. For instance, NIMD Ethiopia developed a mobile app to facilitate direct citizen input into legislative processes, fostering increased political participation and engagement.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page



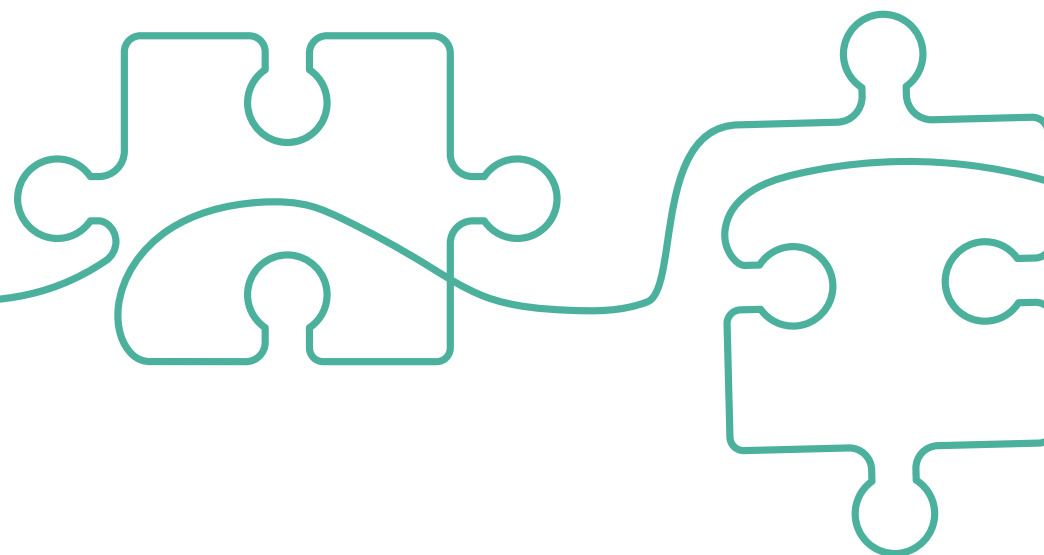
## Strengthening Democratic Infrastructure in numbers:

Number of political parties trained:

**226**

## Building on our activities in 2023 and looking ahead to 2024, we are excited to:

- Develop a political communication module - for NIMD's Democracy School - which aims to bridge the communication gap between politicians and citizens, encouraging ongoing dialogue beyond elections, and further enhancing political communication.
- Use the lessons learned collected in 2023 as a stepping stone to develop more practical tools for the country offices whilst ensuring the tools adaptability to each office's unique contexts.
- Document successful citizen participation initiatives across NIMD to share insights and encourage collaboration.
- Innovate our work and continue exploring technology as a tool to enhance political communication.



# You need one to do the other:

## Using Holistic Thinking to Build Bridges in Kenya



2023 saw Kenya engulfed in large-scale protests nationwide, led by the online call #Maandamano – Protest in Swahili.

The protests were a penultimate response to a culmination of two events: First, the high cost of living crisis raging in the country - caused in part by Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine in 2022 and the country's high debts, which pushed up taxes and prices for citizens. Second, there were misgivings concerning the August 2022 general elections, where the opposition coalition challenged the validity of the presidential election.

In response to the protests, the parliamentary representatives of both parliamentary coalitions came together to form the national dialogue committee to address these issues. This opened the door to broader conversations on legal reforms and addressing the constitutional 2/3 gender rule, among others.

In this context, with protests raging, NIMD started working with the Political Parties Liaison Committee (PPLC), a dialogue platform established by the Political Parties Act, comprised of representatives of all registered political parties in Kenya, the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). NIMD Kenya offered both technical and dialogue assistance support to the PPLC. In May 2023, for example, we organized a political party dialogue training for the new leadership of the PPLC. Since then, NIMD Kenya has been working with the PPLC to ensure the smooth running of the dialogue platform and submit legal reform proposals to the national dialogue committee.





## Meeting Ronald

At the helm of the ship stands Ronnie Ojwang, NIMD Kenya's Director. Whilst NIMD has been active in Kenya since 2003, we only recently set up shop - an office - in September 2022. Since then, the team has hit the ground running and has worked in the Kenyan context to continue to bridge the gap between the opposition parties, the caucuses, and the citizens and their elected officials.

We speak to Ronnie just as he is about to run to another meeting, the People's Dialogue Festival, where the European Union Representative to Kenya will open the festival, which has taken place for the past five years. The festival is organized by the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD), a former partner, and attracts hundreds of people from across the political spectrum and citizens from all walks of life. This year, NIMD also had a stand together with The Oslo Center and Mzalendo, alongside the political parties who hand out flyers and engage with the citizens who join. Voices during the event ranged from speakers calling for collaboration instead of competition (to advance democratic initiatives), to rapporteurs marking the event as an essential initiative to bridge the gap between citizens and politicians.

## You need one to do the other

Rebuilding trust to foster positive and sustainable change requires a holistic approach. It is about re-engaging disenchanted citizens and supporting politicians in becoming responsive political actors.

"I want to leave the space I work in better than when I found it." - Irene Mayaka, Nominated Member of the Kenya National Assembly, Participant of the Kenya Democracy Academy



Photo: Ronnie in action.





NIMD Kenya's current Democracy Academy focuses on Members of Parliament (MPs) from across the political spectrum. We concentrate on MPs as they are an essential vehicle for democratic change. We want to invest in their talents and democratic thinking and give them the tools to do their job comfortably. Through the Academy, we can also lay links between the different politicians from different parties to foster a sense of understanding between them.

On the other hand, engaging with citizens by, for example, being present as politicians at the People's Dialogue Festival remains crucial. Ronnie shares the trend they have seen over the years - rising disengagement from the population, particularly youth, who comprise over 80 per cent of the population, towards democracy. The voting turnout, although still higher than in most European countries, is dropping with each election.

## Tackling the disenchantment of youth towards Democracy

"Mounting disengagement is one of the biggest challenges of NIMD Kenya," says Ronnie. Officials articulated well during the campaign, but once they took office, the citizens feel a shift and left with empty promises. "The key thing for me is how we reach disengaged voters," shared Ronnie. "We cannot force anyone to engage, but we look at how we can equip groups to also see the value of participating in politics and decision-making." How do we bridge the gap between politicians and citizens to rebuild trust?

Targeting one of the largest disengaged voting blocs – the country's youth - the team is looking at different ways to engage them. Their approach is two-pronged. "On the one hand, it is indeed about engaging the population and working with Civil Society Organizations, but we also plan to implement two more Democracy Schools that will target young politicians, both aspiring and well as those in office."

For example, Ronnie shares, "we will be using artists and influencers to engage young people through digital mediums or any other space where they are active."

Building bridges between people is in our DNA at NIMD. We are an extensive network of practitioners who, through constant learning, are refining our tools for intervention. We ensure relationships are made, supported and offered the right tools to foster long-term and peaceful connections to overcome their differences and work towards a common goal.

To achieve this, we recognize the need for a holistic approach to move from polarization to building bridges. In Kenya, we are committed to engaging citizens and supporting politicians in meaningful interactions that address pressing concerns such as the cost-of-living crisis and the debt crisis. We are confident that by working together and staying committed to our mission, we can build bridges that will stand the test of time.



**Our organization:**

# NIMD's commitment to equality, integrity and our people



NIMD thrives because of the passion, knowledge, and expertise of the people we work with, and we are proud of our extensive global network of country offices and partners, all working towards the vital goal of establishing responsive democratic systems.

NIMD has 16 country offices, including Armenia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Jordan, Kenya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Somaliland, Uganda and Venezuela. The head office of NIMD is based in the Netherlands. The number of NIMD employees worldwide is around 130.

## Gender and diversity

NIMD is committed to empowering women and supporting their participation in politics around the world. This is also reflected in our organization, where we believe in and cultivate a culture where gender equality and empowerment of women are embedded in all decision-making and programming processes. 2023 was no exception. In line with the conducted external Gender Audit recommendations of 2022, in 2023 we:

- Conducted a Feminist leadership training for NIMD staff.
- Organized a seminar on women political participation and feminist leadership during our internal partner week.

NIMD remains committed to the recommendations of the gender audit and will continue to follow up the recommended points in 2024.



World map



Content page



Previous/Next page



# Integrity

NIMD is committed to safeguarding and promoting integrity. We expect all employees to display an open and responsible attitude towards each other, being respectful, embracing differences, being honest and accountable, thus promoting a healthy and safe working environment for all employees and partners we work with.

## Integrity refresher

We do this by ensuring that all employees, at all levels of the organization, take responsibility for integrity. We share our integrity policy and code of conduct at the start of any work relation. The key principle of the policy is that every person working for and with NIMD will be treated with respect and dignity.

In 2023, we held our annual Integrity Refreshment event, a day dedicated to integrity for all staff in the Netherlands, where we discussed and addressed hypothetical integrity dilemmas and how to deal with them. At this event we also looked at our intercultural communication during a training given by the Clingendael Institute.

During the refreshment event, the Integrity Policy was updated and adopted, we asked all staff members in the Netherlands to re-sign the Code of Conduct. Our Country Offices will follow.

## Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment

At NIMD, we make sure that people feel safe to speak up and address any kind of misconduct. We are constantly working to improve measures to ensure the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), which is why, in 2023, we held a webinar with the NIMD country offices and our consortium partners on SEAH. The aim was threefold. First, to make NIMD network members

aware of what SEAH stands for and why it is so important. Second, to introduce participants to tools and NIMD's policy on SEAH. Third, we wanted to provide participants with the opportunity to exchange, explore experiences and see how to work on this in their specific contexts. In 2024, we will organize a follow-up session.

## Confidential Counsellors

NIMD has two Confidential Counsellors at Headquarters (one internal and one external) and a network of three Confidential Counsellors for NIMD country offices. In general, the Confidential Counsellors guide and support staff with questions and complaints related to unwanted behaviour such as sexual intimidation, aggression and violence, bullying and discrimination.

In 2023, there were five reports to the confidential counsellors at headquarters. Most of these reports were dealt with internally.

## Our continued commitment to integrity

At NIMD, we value and learn from our mistakes; that is how we maintain our commitment to integrity. We continuously exchange and work together with integrity specialists and learn from the practices of other organizations through the platform of the branch organization Partos.



# People & leadership

## Leadership training

Building on culture and teamwork development, initiatives were taken to support the Country Directors with a series of leadership training courses, with the support of an external consultant. Through these trainings, we discussed our vision on leadership both in our ways of working as an organization internally, and in our various products, such as the Democracy Schools, the capacity building of democratic institutions and our support to dialogue. We consider that democracy today needs political leaders who no longer impose their solutions top-down, but are capable to be open and accessible, show their vision and ambitions but also their limits and doubts, work with stakeholders, and build solutions together with them through participative approaches. Through this type of courageous and open leadership, political actors succeed in regaining the confidence that is eroding in many countries where NIMD works.

## Human Resources

At the beginning of 2023, we took on board a permanent HR Advisor. This was in response to our aim to further strengthen our organizational culture, employee development, and growth and to standardize our HR policies across the network.

An induction programme was rolled out in the first quarter of 2023 to support new colleagues to integrate in a smooth manner. A buddy programme along with line manager support, an information package, self-paced learning materials and audiovisual tools were designed for this purpose.

NIMD has always focused on providing its staff with a platform for growth and development. Considering this, the budget for personal development and training was scaled up in 2023. NIMD not only encourages skill development on an individual level, but also offers team building and group training. During the last quarter of 2023, a session on leadership skills was organized for the entire team of HQ to build and align with the training initiatives organized for the Country Directors.

An employee feedback survey was rolled out in the last quarter of 2023 to understand genuine concerns of colleagues, work on actionable steps and improve employee engagement. The findings of which were later presented to the staff along with the initiatives planned.

Our parental leave policy was revised following the amendment of the policy by the Dutch Government. The policy was revised and updated considering the Dutch law and to support employees in their parental journey. This was done in collaboration with the staff representation.

## Our Governance

NIMD's Supervisory council is tasked with overseeing and supporting where possible NIMD's day-to-day affairs, financial management, and policies pursued by the executive director. In 2023, the terms of three members of the Supervisory Council came to an end and two new members joined.

**A more detailed overview of our governance and organizational structure can be found in our 2023 Financial report, available as of August 2023.**

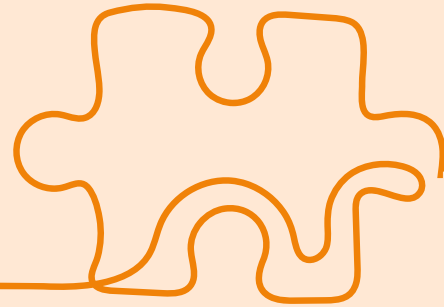


# Our 2023 funding partners

- **Demo Finland**
- **European Union**
- **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)**
- **Global Affairs Canada**
- **International Office for Migration (IOM)**
- **Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland**
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**
- **Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands**
- **Open Society Foundations**
- **Rockefeller Brothers Fund**
- **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)**
- **Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)**
- **The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)**
- **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**
- **UN Women**
- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**
- **United States Institute of Peace (USIP)**
- **Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund**

**NIMD's audited financial figures for 2023 – including income, expenditure and results – will be available as of August 2024 in our Financial Report 2023 at [www.nimd.org](http://www.nimd.org).**





**Democracy starts with dialogue.**