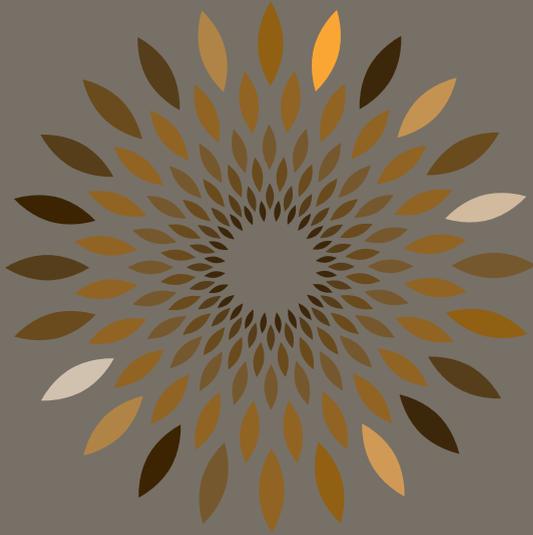

Democracy:
testimonies of a work
in progress





Democracy: testimonies of a work in progress

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Preface

by Bernard Bot
President of the Board, NIMD

The international context for the support of democracy has changed substantially in 2008. The financial crisis has triggered a deep economic recession that is rapidly spreading across the world. Increasing concerns about the global impact of climate change and the inadequacy of the international governance system to respond to these crises, ought to result in a renewed interest in the architecture of multilateral cooperation. The election of President Obama in the United States and the foreign policy of his administration may create further momentum for multilateral approaches to address global challenges.

The foreign policy of the Dutch government, in line with the external policies of the European Union, actively supports multilateral economic and political cooperation. It strongly favours building partnerships with governments around the world to anchor democracy and the rule of law. The relationships, which NIMD has established with political leaders and parties in 17 young democracies, have grown into a partnership that shares the same essential objectives. The support provided by NIMD is a contribution to a better performance of democracy in partner countries. We are convinced that better democratic governance creates better conditions for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and for sustainable and equitable economic development.

This publication contains a collection of stories by NIMD partners who, in their own words, provide an account of the results that they have achieved with support of NIMD in the past year. Published together with the abstract of our annual report 2008 – which you can find in the foldout attached to this booklet – the stories are organised around some key policy concepts that inform contemporary debates on international cooperation. Accordingly, each story is both a living example of the work that we support, and a testimony to the policies which we believe are required to achieve effective international political cooperation.

Making democracies perform better

More focus on the political dimension – that is one of the messages for international cooperation today. Without more accountable governments and better performing political systems, the international endeavour to deliver on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is destined to fail. Facilitating the political reforms necessary to make democracies perform better is NIMD's core business. All our programmes in young democracies centre on the engagement of key political actors in efforts to enhance the performance of their political systems, including the political parties and their relations with civil society, the private sector and the media.

Many NIMD programmes are right at the heart of political reform processes, including countries that feature in this collection of democracy stories: Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia and Mali. These countries are involved in peaceful constitutional or law reform processes, which seek, among other things, to rebalance the powers of the Executive in relation to the Legislative and the Judiciary; to redesign electoral systems with a view to make them more inclusive and representative; and to regulate the financing of political parties in order to combat corruption.

Accountability and ownership

NIMD's contribution to these efforts is directed both at the content of reforms, to ensure a better performance of democracy, and on the accountability of the process itself, to ensure a widely shared ownership of the reforms through participation of the population. The additional focus on process is a key feature of the NIMD approach, which recognizes local ownership and inclusive

dialogues to build trust among politicians and constituencies and foster a democratic culture. Institutional reforms may be supported but if these reforms are not internalized and lead to enhanced democratic practice, accountability and ownership remain hollow phrases.

Trends

In the evolution of NIMD programmes three trends are noticeable. The first is a trend to facilitate reform processes at the core of political agendas at national levels. The second is a trend to move beyond capitals to decentralized levels. The third is the increasing interest in political education, recognizing that democracy does not function without democrats.

Some of the stories in this collection exemplify these trends. Thus in Ghana, the NIMD programme has facilitated a comprehensive assessment of the state of democracy, resulting in the Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP), a home-grown democratic reform agenda, which is supported by all political parties and widely shared within society at large.

A growing asset in the implementation of the NIMD programmes is the institutionalization of interparty dialogue by our partners in Centres for Multiparty Democracy (CMDs). In two countries featuring in this publication, Mali and Kenya, these Centres are well established.

The trend to move beyond capitals is exemplified by the story on the Shared Municipal Agendas in Guatemala, where politicians and citizens' groups are involved in efforts to make

local governments more accountable. Likewise, in Kenya, the NIMD programme is supporting local initiatives to foster dialogue and build bridges of understanding between ethnic constituencies in the aftermath of the election violence that broke out there in December 2007.

The story of one of the alumni of the Indonesian Sekolah Demokrasi (Democracy School) underscores the rationale of investing in a new generation of politicians. The Democracy School programme is an important experiment in political education, which is receiving interest from other parts of the world.

Partnerships

Another message for international cooperation is more effective collaboration. Yet harmonisation of international support to national and regional programmes is proving a very time-consuming and labour intensive process. In addition, providing support to political parties and movements continues to be something that many international cooperation agencies do not dare to consider. Thus in the Accra Agenda for Action of the recent 3rd high level Aid Effectiveness Conference of the OECD, no reference was made to political parties. This was a missed opportunity: just before the international community convened in Accra, the leadership of the political parties in Ghana presented their DCSP, which still stands as an invitation to international partners to harmonize their support for democratic governance, using this home-grown analysis and International IDEA as their compass.

Fortunately, NIMD does not stand alone in its conviction that international efforts to make political systems perform better should pay due regard to the role of political parties. We work with other politically savvy democracy assistance organisations, such as International IDEA, NDI and IRI, and multilateral organisations such

as UNDP and OESCE. Within the European Union we foster collaboration among democracy assistance practitioners through the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), which we cofounded. And as the story on our partnership with the Dutch Institute for Political Participation (IPP) exemplifies, in our experience collaboration can and does lead to innovation.

Democracy: a work in progress

With the various international developments and trends in NIMD's programmes, it is important to conclude that the core business of NIMD – that is, to help political parties in young democracies bring about the political reforms necessary to make democracies perform better – has not changed. Accordingly, our programmes continue to centre on three objectives: 1) contribute to the strengthening of multiparty democratic systems, 2) support the institutional development of political parties, and 3) improve the relations between political society and civil society, including the private sector and the media.

As the story on party development in Mali illustrates, when these three objectives work together, they help bring about more accountable governments, more representative political parties, and better performing political systems in NIMD programme countries; more stability in the relations with neighbouring countries; and better conditions for sustainable development. And since we are an organisation of political parties, our programmes continue to benefit from the expertise of political practitioners, such as those in the story on the political participation of women in Ghana, who know that democracy is always a work in progress.

Roel von Meijenfeldt,
Executive Director, NIMD



Inclusivity

NIMD offers a new approach to international democracy support. As a coalition of Dutch political parties across the political spectrum, NIMD can work directly with all political leaders and their parties in young democracies. NIMD invites political parties to cooperate on the advancement of democracy – learning to ‘disagree without becoming disagreeable’. In most NIMD programme countries, political parties have formed their own interparty dialogue platforms that seek to forge a common ground for the advancement of democratic reforms. The approach is expressly inclusive in recognition that all parties are shareholders in a democratic political system, and that all share responsibility for its well-functioning. Through this approach, democratic reforms obtain a more widely shared legitimacy. That is why inclusivity is a cornerstone of all NIMD programmes.

“Political parties must be anchored in society. We want ordinary citizens to become active members of the party.”

Words by: Me Ha Midou Diabaté, Secretary General of PARENA and Member of the National Assembly of Mali for the SADI-PARENA parliamentary group.



Making political parties perform better: an example from Mali

Together with our Malian partner, the Centre pour le Dialogue Inter-Parties et la Démocratie (CMDID) NIMD promotes interparty dialogue and supports the development of political parties in Mali. Since the elections of 2007, quite a few political parties have formed parliamentary groups. In some cases these coalitions are evolving in plans to merge.

“I am the General Secretary of the Parti pour la Renaissance Nationale (PARENA). We are a social democratic party. After the parliamentary elections of 2007, we formed a group with another party, SADI (Solidarity for African Development and Integration). Currently we are in the opposition. As a parliamentary group on the left we make our voice heard in the National Assembly when we believe that the government is not acting sufficiently in the interest of the people. For instance, we have voted against the privatisation of a major cotton processing plant recently. We are also active on women’s rights. Activists of the group currently campaign against female circumcision in rural areas.

Since our parties have formed a parliamentary group so recently, there is still a lot of organizing to do. In 2008, the SADI-PARENA coalition has received support from NIMD to strengthen the organisation, our policies and strategies. To this end, the two parties have met several times to develop a work program, setting tasks and improving our internal communication. The support has enabled us to acquire modern means of communication. We now have Internet access, and several computers and photocopiers are available. All this has helped us improve our organisation, our financial administration, and the management of human resources. Because of these improvements we have become eligible for public funding in 2009. This is a direct result of the support from NIMD.

Now that we have improved our organisation, we have moved on to work on policy and outreach. We want to build stronger relation-

ships with the base. Parties must be anchored in society. We want ordinary citizens to become active members of the party. For this purpose we have created the Centre for Citizenship and Democracy. At the Centre we train people, especially women and youth, with a view to grant them a better understanding of the practices of political parties. To strengthen our coalition and eventually merge the two parties, we have also began to train people, especially young people, who can assume future leadership positions.

As General Secretary of PARENA I am also a member of the board of the Malian Centre for Interparty Dialogue and Democracy (CMID), which is supported by NIMD. I believe the

ongoing dialogue between political parties is essential. It has already helped to civilize politics; it may even contribute to the political stability of the country. CMID offers a place where all political parties are welcome to work and consult documentation. The Centre also initiates debates, not only in Bamako, but also in rural areas, on issues of national interest.

Through the Centre I hope to have the opportunity to meet with politicians from other African countries this year. Particularly I would like to go to Ghana, Senegal and Benin to see how the opposition is organized there, and generally, to learn how political parties fare in countries such as Ghana, where democracy has made significant progress.”

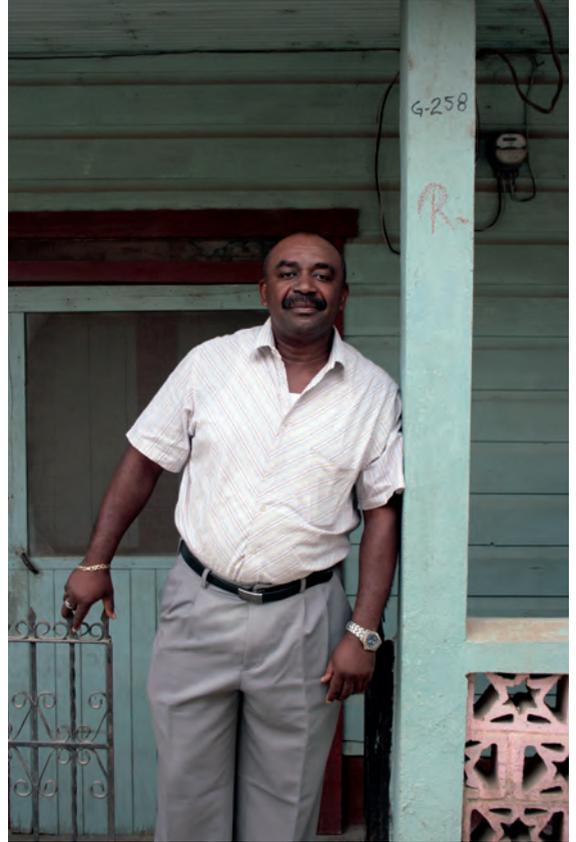


Accountability

Only in a democracy, leaders can be held accountable for the way they use their power through a system of both formal (e.g. legislation) and informal (e.g. publicity) checks and balances. In the relationship between government and citizens, the citizen delegates the use of power through elections in exchange for a government's accountability for the exercise of said power. Accountability serves both a political and operational purpose: it not only serves to prevent the abuse of power by the Executive but also provides incentives for effective and efficient government. The same principles apply to the functioning of political parties and their relationships with civil society. Hence, the three objectives of NIMD – systemic democratic reforms, institutional development of political parties, and enhanced relations between politics and society – work together to improve accountability within the political systems of our programme countries.

“We assert the right that we have, as citizens, to exercise control over the management of public affairs.”

Words by: Ednea Patricia de León Quinto and Romualdo Augusto Mejía López



Shared Municipal Agendas make local governments more accountable in Guatemala

In Guatemala NIMD supports a programme that engages local politicians and citizens' groups in an effort to devise a Shared Municipal Agenda (*Agenda Municipal Compartida*): a joint plan for the development of their municipality. With the programme, which currently covers 27 municipalities, NIMD and its partners – Acción Ciudadana, Guatemala's Supreme Electoral Tribunal, and the Italian aid agency Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) – seek to help municipal governments improve the management of public funds and services, and make them more accountable to their residents.

Ednea Patricia de León Quinto and Romualdo Augusto Mejía López live in Izabal, a department in the northeast of Guatemala on the Caribbean coast. They are active citizens who take an interest in public affairs. Ednea works with a civil society group in the port of Puerto Barrios. Romualdo is a politician for the Republican Front of Guatemala (FRG) in nearby Livingston. Last year, they both helped establish a Shared Municipal Agenda (SMA) in their municipality: a local development plan with proposals to improve health care, education, security, and the environment.

Romualdo's constituency consists mainly of Garífunas, one of the many ethnic communities in town. "Livingston is a very special municipality due to its great diversity. We have Q'eqchi', Ladino, people of Indian descent, Chinese and Garífunas." According to Romualdo, these differences do not pose a problem: "We all participate in each others cultural activities, and when we gather to discuss issues, we try to reach consensus".

It is in this spirit that Romualdo has been working with other local politicians and citizens, organized in a Citizens' Action Committee (CAC), to devise a plan to address some of the most pressing problems shared by all inhabitants of Livingston.

Unemployment is such a problem. "Within the Garífuna population that I represent, there are many who are unemployed", Romualdo observes. "Very few of them have a university degree, and job opportunities are scarce in Livingston." The shared agenda, which Romualdo has helped develop, contains propos-

als to address this situation. As he explains: “We propose that the government provides us with incentives for self-employment, for example, in the tourism sector, or through agricultural development”.

Likewise, in Puerto Barrios, citizens and politicians have worked out a shared agenda for the development of their municipality. Initially, the discussions were “very tense” says Ednea, who participated in the meetings. “Each party and civil society organisation wanted to push its own agenda. Yet eventually we understood that this defeats the purpose of agenda sharing; that we had to partake and truly share ideas.”

As Puerto Barrios is a bustling seaport, the town attracts people from other parts of Izabal looking for employment. It also attracts crime. “There is considerable drug trafficking, while mugging, robbery, and murder rates are on the rise” says Ednea. Another challenge is corruption. The municipality of Puerto Barrios is

heavily indebted. According to Ednea “it has been ransacked by the authorities, by people who have been in power. This is an issue that many do not like to discuss”.

In the meetings leading up to the presentation of the Shared Municipal Agenda in September 2008, Ednea managed to table the issue of corruption. This culminated in the initiative to conduct a series of ‘social audits’ to review the municipality’s handling of public funds. In a first case, Ednea has helped conduct an audit of the management of a public hospital in Puerto Barrios. The findings are included in the SMA document. Even if the authorities do not respond immediately to this audit’s recommendations, Ednea hopes that more social audits will be conducted in the coming years. “These audits remind officials that they are held accountable by the residents of Puerto Barrios as we assert the right that we have, as citizens, to exercise control over the management of public affairs.”



Ownership

NIMD's approach to democracy support is exemplified in the Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP) of the political parties in Ghana, and Guatemala's Shared National Agenda (SNA). These are comprehensive *political* reform agendas based on a home-grown assessment of democratic deficiencies and proposals to address these. While the principles on the basis of which NIMD facilitates such reform agendas are similar, the content and outcome of the process differs from country to country. As distinctly political reform agendas they may be seen to complement the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) promoted by multilateral organisations. NIMD hopes that more shared reform agendas after the examples Ghana's DCSP and Guatemala's SNA, will result from other programmes in the years to come.

“The DCSP advances an authentic approach to democracy in Africa.”

Words by: Jean Mensa, Administrator of the Institute for Economic Affairs, Ghana



Ghana's DCSP: a home-grown democratic reform agenda

In October last year at a launch event in Accra, Ghana's political leadership presented their Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP) to the public. Supported by NIMD and the Accra-based Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), the Paper offers both a comprehensive review of the state of democracy in Ghana and a roadmap on how to enhance its performance. IEA Administrator Jean Mensa explains how the DCSP is contributing to tangible political change.

“In 2006, following almost three years of discussion, the political parties undertook a groundwork study on the various arms of government and democratic institutions in the country. They really wanted to assess how democracy has fared here since a new constitution came into effect in 1992.

The parties appointed a representative team of consultants who spoke with all significant stakeholders – from party members, parliament, the judiciary, and civil society associations to grassroots groups, including women's organisations, youth, chiefs and religious leaders – to gather their views on these issues.

As a result, the DCSP is joint analysis of the country's democratic system and it proposes a number of practical reforms.

Let's take the legislature for example. The constitution provides that the majority of our ministers be appointed from the legislature. Yet the general consensus is that taking good MPs away from parliament weakens the oversight ability of the legislature, and inhibits our system of checks and balances. The DCSP identifies this gap and makes a practical reform proposal.

Another area is the judiciary. The president can appoint any number of judges on a case-by-case basis to the supreme courts, entitling him or her to basically pack the courts. The DCSP makes a recommendation to set upper limits.

Constitutional review is another important area. I remember that on the 10th anniversary of the constitution there was much discussion as to whether it should be amended or not and, depending on which side of government you were on, you either said yes or no. In the DCSP political parties agree for the first time that to go

forward as a nation, we have to review the constitution. In the run up to the elections in December 2008, all the parties adopted this proposal into their manifestos. As result, constitutional reform is firmly on the political agenda this year.

The DCSP also recommends that a fund be set up for the electoral commission to help it maintain its independence. Our new president, John Atta Mills, has promised to set up this fund, in keeping with the recommendation.

Indeed, the political parties have adopted many of the proposals in the DCSP, and three bills have been produced in the process: the funding of political parties, the review of the political parties law itself, and the presidential transition bill. The parties have all pledged in their manifestos that they would pass these bills. The new government seems firmly fixed on implementing the proposals, acknowledging that it is a

product of a multiparty collaboration. Honestly, without the DCSP this would not have happened.

Because they have been included and acknowledged, people feel their ideas are valued. In this regard, the DCSP has done much to cultivate a sense among the political parties that the democratic process is important, and that relations between the parties are as integral to the health of our nation as any of the political goals they pursue individually. And that for us has been the beauty of it.

Ultimately the DCSP advances an authentic approach to democracy in Africa. We certainly hope that it sets an example, inspiring our neighbours to examine their own democratic practices and find ways to improve them.”

Download your copy of the DCSP at www.nimd.org/document/778



No democracy without democrats

The NIMD approach focuses very much on furthering trust among key players within political society and between political society, civil society, the private sector and the media. One of the lessons learned from the Democracy School programme in Indonesia is that political education helps enable a new generation of politicians to bridge divides between politics and society. It is encouraging that a similar approach has been suggested for a prospective programme in Afghanistan while analogous initiatives are now also undertaken in southern Africa. The focus on teaching potential leaders in the practical application of democratic instruments, complements efforts to achieve institutional reforms.

“The Democracy School made me realize that education is key to help people appreciate their own capacity to change their destiny.”

Words by: Tri Umiyati



The Democracy School: education for a new genera- tion of politicians in Malang, Indonesia

My name is Tri Umiyati, Umi for short. I am a businesswoman – I run a hotel – and a graduate of the Democracy School in Malang. This year I participated in the elections as a legislative candidate for the Democratic Party. My constituency is Junrejo, a community situated about 15 kilometers from the city of Malang.

I have always been interested in politics. During my childhood, my father trained me to become a politician. Early on I joined his party but I never became a legislative candidate for I was too young and needed more experience. Instead I became active in organizing women within the party and advised the board on gender issues.

I heard about the Democracy School when it had just started offering courses three years ago. A friend of mine told me that the courses are not only for aspiring politicians and social activists but also open to professionals who want to learn about democracy. It appealed to me but it was too late to apply. Last year I eventually seized the opportunity to enroll.

When the course began, I wondered how this small class of about 20 people or so could help me learn anything about how democracy works in practice. Yet what I learned there was beyond my imagination. I was taught how to think critically, how to deliver good public speeches, and share my political views with an audience.

The course also introduced me to democratic philosophy. Since I am a practical thinker, I admit that it was difficult material. However, I have come to appreciate the importance of thinking about democracy from different points of view. It has helped me understand how democracy can work in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, NIMD supports local Democracy Schools where young politicians, social activists, and professionals are trained in democratic values and practices. The schools offer a unique venue to involve citizens in local politics, foster a new generation of democratic politicians, and deepen Indonesian democracy.

Since 2004, Democracy Schools have been set up in five provinces. More than 500 students have successfully completed the one-year course. About 100 of those participated this year in the elections as legislative candidates. The Democracy Schools are an initiative of the Jakarta-based Indonesian Community for Democracy (KID) with support of NIMD.

At the Democracy School, I did not only attend classes but also engaged in practical activities outside the classroom. I have performed in a democracy talk show series on radio and television, and with others I initiated an outreach activity, providing inhabitants of the Singosari district with information about how to obtain credit for their farms and other small businesses.

I like the aphorism ‘mighty oaks from little acorns’, which means great things start very small. My own business grew from small beginnings. Similarly I have come to believe in the growth of democracy in Indonesia. The Democracy School has convinced me of that. Due to the course I took, I think I have become more democratic, in the sense that I have become more open to discussions with people who have different backgrounds and opinions. I have also come to believe that democratic politics is the best way to improve conditions for all.

That is the reason why I joined the electoral competition: I want to be a part of these

improvements. My constituency consists of people whose livelihoods depend on a variety of activities and income levels – from agriculture and cattle breeding, to handicraft manufacturing and trading. As a businesswoman I can only attend to the needs of some. But as a politician I can use my experience to try and help many more people improve their condition.

The course I took at the Democracy School made me realize that education is key to help people appreciate their own capacity to change their destiny. And since I am a practical thinker after all, I already have some feasible plans to improve economic circumstances in my constituency. For instance, I would like to develop a business that uses the milk produced in Junrejo to make yoghurt and cheese of good quality. This will make cattle breeders less dependent on the market price for raw milk and bring employment opportunities to the community.



Dialogue

Young democracies are often characterized by entrenched political antagonism and at times violent conflicts. NIMD recognizes that the cause of many conflicts in young democracies and fragile states is the lack of trust among political leaders and a zero-sum approach to politics, which excludes major sections of the population. Political conflicts inhibit the chances for sustainable socio-economic development. NIMD programmes support political reforms initiated by the leadership of political parties in young democracies that help reduce conflicts, forge understanding among constituencies, and advance democratic practices and values.

“I was received so well that I felt like one of them.”

Words by: Reuben Magoko, Esther Mureithi and Njeri Kabeberi



Building bridges of understanding between ethnic constituencies in Kenya

In the aftermath of the violence that broke out following the disputed elections in December 2007, NIMD's Kenyan partner, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD-K) created a project called Building Bridges of Understanding. This project, a pilot designed to promote dialogue between different ethnic communities, involved a Kieni constituency from Central Kenya and their Lua counterparts from the Bondo constituency, hosting each other in their homes for a week long visit. These visits changed perceptions previously held by the individuals, as they were exposed to, and educated about the culture of the other. This is the story of what transpired.

Before he made the epic journey from his Kieni home in the heart of Central Kenya to the sunny Nyamira Village in Bondo District, Mr Reuben Magoko was nervous. He was journeying as part of a 10-man team led by Member of Parliament (MP) Nemesysus Warugongo, and the string of myths he had heard about the Lua made him apprehensive.

Another team, led by Bondo MP Oburu Oginga, set off from Bondo for Kieni. Each of the groups comprised the young, the elderly, as well as people living with disabilities.

On arrival, Mr Magoko was introduced to his host, Mr Michael Opata. "I was received so well that I felt like one of them," he said at the end of his stay. A goat was slaughtered in his honour and when night fell, the host couple left their bed for him.

Mr Magoko also had a chance to experience life in a polygamous setting. His perception of the rival Luo community had undergone a complete transformation, thanks to the visit.

During the visit, a trip to Got Ramogi, the home of the founding father of the Luo community in Kenya, was made. They also had an encounter with fish landing at Wich Lum Beach and Oyamo Island in Lake Victoria.

The delegation criss-crossed Luo Nyanza, chatting, eating, worshipping and generally getting a feel of life in the area. They also visited the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga mausoleum in Bondo. In all the homes and museums they visited, they were exposed to the Luo culture.

For Mrs Esther Mureithi, a member of the delegation to Bondo, the love that she experienced at her host's was unbelievable. "I felt as if I were among members of my immediate family,"

she said. The reception exceeded the expectations she had when she set aside her job for a few days and bid farewell to her husband and their three children.

In future, she says she wants such visits to be fostered in the country among different ethnic communities, besides maintaining an open communication channel. “Let’s not allow ourselves to be divided along ethnic lines,” she says.

Mr Magoko says that for as long as he could remember, harmony amongst different ethnic communities has been a positive thing in Kenya. “When there are no communities feuding, there is no trouble,” he says.

“Before the teams were dispatched from either end, intense negotiations had to be done with the MPs,” says Njeri Kabeberi who heads the Centre for Multiparty Democracy in Kenya, and who accompanied the delegation on the trip to the Bondo District.

Ms Kabeberi says that understanding cultures of others will help change Kenyans’

perceptions, attitudes and ways of thinking about other communities. “Stereotypes and prejudices about characters and lifestyles of various ethnic groups abound in the country. This has been blamed for hatred.”

When chaos broke out following the disputed 2007 presidential polls, a significant minority of Kenyans turned against one another. Hundreds were killed and thousands forced from their homes. Ms Kabeberi says it was only after this violence that the idea of organising exchange visits among different ethnic communities was conceived to promote understanding.

“We need to deal with this issue once and for all” she says, and, with a mixture of foresight and finality in her voice she adds “then we can make Kenya a safe place for democracy.”

The Bridges of Understanding programme, and the bonds of trust and empathy it creates, is purposefully and inclusively bringing that vision all the closer to reality.



Peer-to-peer learning

Democratic development does not comply to some template that can be readily exported. It is an incremental process that needs to grow from within. As a provider of assistance to this process in some 17 young democracies, NIMD is well aware that the value of foreign experts is limited. However, in its work with politicians NIMD has learned that exchanges with peers from other countries are valuable. They contribute to comparison of political practices, reflection on entrenched positions, and new ways of thinking about democracy.

“The value of fellow female support was an important lesson drawn from the training. Everyone realized that helping peers could enhance the position of women in politics.”

Words by: Anita de Horde and Brigitte van der Burg



“Poor but bold”: advancing the political participation of women in Ghana

In August 2008 two Dutch party representatives went to Accra, Ghana, where they trained a group of 17 female candidates for the parliamentary elections in December. They trained the women in campaign planning, fundraising, and public speech. They also helped them write personal profiles, which were published in several national newspapers. The training session is part of a series of activities organized by NIMD's Ghanaian partner, the Institute of Economic Affairs, to promote the participation of women in politics.

Anita de Horde is Press Officer and Campaign Coordinator of the Dutch GreenLeft party in the European Parliament. Together with politician Brigitte van der Burg, Member of Parliament for the Dutch Party for Freedom and Democracy (vvd), she travelled to Ghana for NIMD to give training on the ins and outs of campaigning, specifically aimed at women. “Africa in itself was already new and exciting to me. I had never been there before. The fact that the training was aimed at women, was particularly interesting, as the empowerment of women is the most efficient way to speed up development.” So she immediately accepted NIMD's invitation to contribute in preparing Ghanaian women with political aspirations for the elections in December.

“How to convince people to vote for you?, seemed the first logical question”, Anita de Horde explains, “but it remained awfully quiet. We proposed the 17 candidates several answers, which some copied vigorously. I then asked them to focus on their constituency: what is necessary in your district? To this, they answered practically: ‘we want to build new roofs, improve the housing conditions, hand out condoms’. Brigitte then stepped in and suggested that as a politician you should not merely seek to bring projects to your region, but also contribute to policy and lawmaking.”

“I talked about what you can and cannot do and achieve as a Member of Parliament”, explains Brigitte van der Burg, number 4 on the list of the vvd. “I had also recently studied this, as I am new in Parliament.” Brigitte van der Burg has made an incredible step, not having

worked in politics but immediately attaining her number 4 spot. “I experienced what these women were about to experience. ‘Who is this woman?’, I heard people think, when I entered the political arena. I had to make clear who I was, why I wanted to be in politics and what my focus points would be – to convince first my party and then for the larger audience, what I would do for the vvd.”

The women in the training program had already been elected by their respective parties. Yet, it is difficult for a woman to compete against an opposing male candidate. There is a knock-out system per district. And women have a disadvantage to start with, as female political participation is not per se stimulated in Ghanaian society. Specifically the financial resources needed to be a candidate are sometimes hard to find.

“‘Poor but bold’ was one of the slogans the women made in an afternoon workshop I led”, Anita de Horde reminisces. “Money was a big issue. The impression amongst some participants existed that after participation in the two-day training, they would go home with campaign

funding. A Ghanaian woman, a lecturer at the University of Accra, led a session on fundraising. Not just actual money, but also support in kind. She gave the participants concrete advice. ‘If your uncle, brother or brother-in-law owns a cab, let him carry your picture on this car.’ Responding to ladies’ request for money, she posed them a question: ‘Would you prefer to have a mango or mango seeds?’”.

“I was very impressed by these women. They came from all over the country to participate in the training. They worked from 7 AM to 6:30 PM and after dinner they continued. They were extremely motivated, which gave me a lot of positive energy and made me realize how privileged I actually am to be a Member of Parliament”, Brigitte van der Burg says, looking back at the experience. “One of our participants has won the elections and is a Member of Parliament now. The value of fellow female support was also an important lesson drawn from the training. Everyone exchanged contact details and realized that helping peers could enhance the position of women in politics. It was very inspiring.”

Partnerships

NIMD can only achieve its mandate successfully in partnership with other stakeholders in democratic development. The first line of partners consists of the multiparty platforms in NIMD programme countries. A second line of partners consists of agencies with a similar mandate to support democracy through work with political parties, such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), Demos, and the Foundations of the German political parties, among others. A third line of partners are bilateral and multilateral organisations that support democratic governance. These include the Dutch embassies and the European Union delegations in NIMD programme countries, the British Department for International Development (DFID), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International IDEA, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), among others. And last but not least there is a fourth line of partners that combine a broader interest in democratization with a specific expertise, such as Radio Netherlands Worldwide (RNW) and the affiliated Training Centre (RNTC), Beerenschot Management Consultants, and the Dutch Institute for Political Participation (IPP).

“We had never worked in such a young democracy, so we joined forces in Georgia: our tool and NIMD’s knowledge of political parties.”

Words by: Nel van Dijk, Director of the Institute for Political Participation



VoteMatch: Dutch voting tool helps Georgian parties define programs

In the run up to the parliamentary elections in May 2008, the NIMD programme in Georgia has helped political parties define their programmes, using VoteMatch, an online voting tool developed by the Dutch Institute for Political Participation.

Nel van Dijk is Director of the Institute for Political Participation (IPP). In 2007–2008 she worked with NIMD on a project in Georgia. One of IPP’s most successful tools for public political participation is the Votematch; a tool that helps voters define their political preference by matching their views on a set of issues with those expressed by political parties in their programs. “It was exciting, because for the first time we were going to use this tool in a different way – helping political parties define their programs for internal use”, Ms van Dijk explains.

“When representatives of the Georgian political parties visited The Netherlands in 2006 to observe the general elections, NIMD brought them to IPP for a visit. I explained what IPP does, and showed them the Votematch. They immediately said: “We want that too!”. I was thrilled by their positive response but we had never worked in such a young democracy before, so we discussed the possibilities with NIMD. We decided to join forces: IPP’s Votematch tool and NIMD’s knowledge of the political parties.”

“We worked on a presentation for the leadership of the political parties in Georgia, showing them how Votematch could be used. Together with NIMD’s partner in Georgia we developed a list of about 160 political positions, which we proposed in the presentation. These were positions, which for instance solicited party views on the autonomous regions, but also on the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church, and the socio-economic situation.”

“It turned out to be rather difficult for the parties to take firm positions, as it entailed a certain vulnerability. After the party leadership

had formulated their positions, their membership was asked to do the same. This was daring. We decided to do a survey per party and agreed with them that our analysis would not be public but merely serve internal party program strengthening.”

When IPP was analyzing the results of the surveys in November 2007, political unrest arose in Georgia. In January 2008, IPP and NIMD returned to Tblisi with the results. “The political parties thought it was a very instructive and useful trajectory”, says Ms van Dijk. Further proceedings were discussed, such as the wish to run a public Votematch before the next elections, which were set for May 2008. A very rigid but doable time schedule was made to rephrase the results of the surveys for a public Votematch, so that every Georgian citizen could define his or her political preference based on content.

“Thousands of newspapers had to be printed and distributed as we could not just reach voters via the Internet as is done here in The Netherlands. Georgia has less than 10%

Internet coverage. We had set everything up. We were just waiting for the final approval of the political parties”, says Ms van Dijk with some disappointment, as she explains. “For Votematch to succeed as an all inclusive public participation tool, every single party has to contribute its standpoints. Otherwise the tool does not work. At the last moment one influential party refused to do so. Another party had hesitated a long time as well but participated in the end. A lot of energy was put into making it a successful Votematch, and it pains me to say that the last part of the project did not come through.”

“The ‘reverse Votematch model’ for internal party program development worked really well though. Part one of the project was definitely a success. We are thinking of doing it elsewhere too, for instance, in Suriname. Yes, together with NIMD. Indeed, that was another very positive aspect of this project: our collaboration. If you would ask me whether I would like to set up another project with NIMD? I would say: ‘When do we start?’”.



Harmonisation and complementarity

The home grown reform agendas supported by NIMD, such as Guatemala's Shared National Agenda (SNA) and Ghana's Democratic Consolidation Strategy Paper (DCSP), carry a broad political consensus. They therefore offer a unique opportunity for other international partners, bilateral and multilateral agencies alike, to harmonize their democratic governance support, as advocated in the OECD Paris Declaration and its successor, the Accra Agenda for Action. Likewise, in Europe NIMD has become an active advocate of multilateral cooperation and a higher EU profile in democracy support. In 2008 NIMD helped launch the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), an organisation founded by some fifteen civil society organisations, that aims to harmonize democracy support initiatives within the European Union.

“We decided that we would work closer together as Europeans in advancing democracy worldwide.”

Words by: Marieke van Doorn, Secretariat Coordinator, EPD



The European Partnership for Democracy

NIMD has been a driving force in the establishment of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD). Based in Brussels, the EPD is an independent organisation that aims to foster democracy support initiatives from Europe. It was founded by some fifteen European democracy support organisations and launched in April 2008 by Václav Havel, Jose Manuel Barroso and Joaquim Chissano.

Marieke van Doorn is Coordinator of EPD's Secretariat since its inception in 2008. "The idea for this organisation originated in 2003 when George Bush listed 'democracy' as a reason to invade Iraq. Together with several other European organisations, NIMD initiated discussions about ways to advance a specific European approach to democracy support."

"If we hold democracy dear as a core value within the European Union, why are Europe's external policies not more explicitly engaged in providing democracy support? What have we learned from the democratic transitions within Europe that can inform a specific European profile in democracy support initiatives? Such were the questions we asked ourselves at a conference in Paris, while protests against the war in Iraq were going on outside in the streets. Later in the evening, in the lobby of the conference hotel, we decided that we would make a statement and work closer together as Europeans in advancing democracy worldwide."

When in 2004 The Netherlands assumed the EU Presidency, NIMD invited EU institutions and organisations from all over Europe to discuss a future EU democracy support agenda at the Peace Palace in The Hague. "This conference was very important to get to know the other European players in the field and to learn how we can complement one another", says Ms van Doorn. "The Dutch Presidency, the Commission and the European Parliament all confirmed the importance of a common Euro-pean agenda for democracy support in countries outside Europe. Yet, it was also understood that it would take time for EU institutions and mem-

ber states to clarify what ‘democracy support’ means and how it can be delivered best.”

Ms van Doorn suggests that the apparent lack of consensus within the EU as to how democracy can be supported may also be considered a strength: “There are 27 member states. Each state has its own perspective on democracy. This suggests that there is no template for democratic government. There is not one model of democracy. Each state has formed its own unique set of institutions and procedures.” She proudly adds: “We have 27 different models of democracy within the EU!” The message is that countries need to build their own democracies and that the EU can facilitate that process without exporting specific models.

In some of the older democracies within the EU, democracy is often taken for granted. However, when Eastern European states joined the EU, enthusiasm for democracy support grew significantly. “The Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians, for example, still know what it is like to live without democracy. In 2009 they will celebrate twenty years of democracy. Twenty years, that is nothing!”

Under the Czech EU Presidency in 2008, EPD organized a conference in Prague. Václav Havel came to speak about the importance of democratization. Yet he also stressed that democracy takes time to grow. Yes, democratic institutions can be built – but a democratic culture? “We still live in fear, when uttering critique”, Mr Havel said. As he explained: “People still fear to be taken away by the secret police. There is little trust. This needs to grow,

while we try to find a way to deal with the past. It takes time to achieve a cultural transition to democracy.” At the end of his speech Havel emphasized the importance of continued investment in a new democratic generation, and suggested that politicians and democracy advocates from Europe’s young democracies share their experiences with people in other, non-EU countries in transition, such as Zimbabwe.

EPD is now actively engaged in advocating a future EU Consensus on Democracy Support, which is currently on the agenda of the Council of the European Union, while a working group of member states is preparing a common EU position. The organisation is also establishing a knowledge hub in Brussels where democracy assistance practitioners can share lessons learned. Furthermore, EPD has started to provide direct assistance to democracy activists in Burma and some countries in the Caucasus, and initiated a dialogue programme between Latin America and Europe.

Mr Havel’s suggestion of Zimbabwe has also been taken seriously. Recently, EPD has started a programme to support the transition process in Zimbabwe, focusing on the effort to establish a new democratic constitution in this troubled country. Ms van Doorn laughs: “After the Minister for Constitutional Change of Zimbabwe has managed to pass a new constitution, I will invite him to Brussels, to share his lessons with us Europeans too!”

For more information about the European Partnership for Democracy, see www.eupd.eu



About NIMD

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is a democracy assistance organisation of political parties in The Netherlands for political parties in young democracies. Founded in 2000 by seven parties (CDA, PvdA, VVD, GroenLinks, D66, ChristenUnie en SGP), NIMD currently works with more than 150 political parties from 17 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe.

NIMD supports joint initiatives of parties to improve the democratic system in their country. NIMD also supports the institutional development of political parties, helps them develop party programmes and assists in efforts to enhance relations with civil society organisations and the media.

For more information, news and programme updates see:
www.nimd.org

Colophon

Democracy: testimonies of a work in progress

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Democracy: testimonies of a work in progress is a collection of stories by politicians, democracy activists and practitioners who, in their own words, provide an account of the results that they have achieved with support of NIMD in 2008. The stories are organised around some key policy concepts that inform contemporary debates on international cooperation. Accordingly, each story is both a living example of the work that we support, and a testimony to the policies which we believe are required to achieve effective international political cooperation.