



# Evaluation of the NIMD Programme 2011-2014 - Inception Study\*

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# 1. Introduction

## Purpose

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) has commissioned this inception report after almost completing the implementation of its third Multi-Annual Plan (2012-2015) (NIMD 2011b), and preparing to implement a fourth (2016-2020). The aim of this inception report is to help inform an evaluation of the organisation, planned for later this year, to measure the programmatic and organisational results that NIMD has achieved between 2011 and 2014. This report seeks to address three overarching questions:

1. To what extent have the NIMD programmes achieved results during 2011-2014 in relation to functioning interparty dialogue; legitimate political parties, and fruitful interaction between political and civil society, as set out in NIMD's Multi-Annual Plan 2012-2015?
2. To what extent has NIMD's choice to sharpen its three main outcomes in its 2012-2015 multi-annual plan led to a deeper programmatic focus, a higher relevance of the programmes and, thus, to better programmatic results?
3. To what extent have changes in NIMD's institutional and organisational set-up since the last institutional evaluation contributed to increased efficiency in programme management, increased effectiveness of its programmes, and increased quality in the running of the organisation as a whole?

This inception report also provides some reflections on a possible institutional evaluation to be undertaken later in 2015. It develops ideas and suggestions on what can be learnt from NIMD's experience during 2011-2015 and what could inform its programming in the coming MAP (2016-2020).

## Methodology

This inception study was conducted by gathering primary and secondary qualitative data, analysing the information collected, and developing responses to the questions posed in the terms of reference (ToRs). The study began with a meeting between the research team and key NIMD staff to discuss the purpose of the study, to agree the methodology, and to identify important secondary sources of information and the actors to be interviewed.

The research for this study was largely desk-based. It involved a review and meta-analysis of NIMD documents and the relevant broader literature, and a total of 26 semi-structured interviews with NIMD staff and stakeholders.

1. Literature review and meta-analysis of NIMD documents

This included a review of the different evaluations (programme, thematic, and institutional) that NIMD has undertaken to date (see Table 1 below for a list of evaluations NIMD carried out from 2009 to 2014)), as well as the Multi-Annual Plans (MAP) for 2012-2015 and 2016-2020, the Theory of Change, country programme reports, and documents relating to the Strategic Partnership Agreement with International IDEA.

**Table 1: List of evaluations that NIMD has undertaken from 2009 to 2014**

<b>Country Programme Evaluations</b>		
Mozambique	Evaluation report NIMD Mozambique programme 2007-2013	2014
Georgia/South Caucasus	Promoting gender awareness and enhancing women's participation in Georgian political life (in-house)	2013
Colombia	Evaluación de Medio Período de la FASE II del Proyecto Fortalecimiento Democrático	2013
Uganda	Mid-term review - NIMD programme in Uganda 2009 – 2013	2013
Tanzania	Evaluation report NIMD's Tanzania programme – 2007-2011	2012
Guatemala	Evaluation of Dutch support to capacity development case study: NIMD country programme in Guatemala	2009
Kenya	Evaluation of Dutch support to capacity development case study: NIMD country programme in Kenya	2009
Mali	Evaluation of Dutch support to capacity development case study: NIMD country programme in Mali	2009
Indonesia	Evaluation report Indonesia	2009
(Ecuador)	(Evaluation commissioned by International IDEA of its programme in Peru and the IDEA- NIMD joint programme in Ecuador)	2009
<b>Thematic evaluations</b>		
Thematic	Evaluation report NIMD's implementation of direct party assistance	2014
<b>Institutional evaluations</b>		
Institutional	Evaluation of Dutch support to capacity development: The case of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), IOB evaluation No. 331	2009

All these documents are cited in the Bibliography at the end of this report. The documents were reviewed at the beginning of the study to gain a broad understanding of NIMD's work and how the organisation has evolved. Analysis of the documents informed the development of interview guides for the next stage of the study. Other literature on political parties, democracy and development, and how donors engage in these issues was also reviewed to shape the interview questions and provide background theory to the analysis of NIMD's work. The full list of documents consulted can be seen in the bibliography.

## 2. Semi-structured interviews

A series of interviews was held with NIMD staff, country partners, partners at International IDEA, members of the NIMD advisory board, representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and selected NIMD peers. In total, 26 people were consulted by phone or Skype using an interview guide to direct the discussion, but allowing for other issues to be raised by interviewees. In addition, a member of the research team went to Stockholm for a meeting between NIMD and International IDEA, intended to discuss the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and to share views about what the SPA has accomplished and lessons learned (see Table 2 for the full list of interviewees).

**Table 2: List of people interviewed as part of the Inception Report**

Stakeholder type	Interviewee
NIMD Management	Hans Bruning, Executive Director
	Pepijn Gerrits, Director Programmes
	Miranda Buitelaar, Head of Finance, Organisation and Quality
NIMD Supervisory Board	Wim Jacobs
NL MFA	Jan van Renselaar
	Marjolein Jongman
NIMD Programme Managers	Heleen Schrooyen: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras
	Wouter Dol: Kenya and Mali
	Lizzy Beekman: Georgia
	Karijn de Jong: Uganda
NIMD Partners	Njeri Kabeberi: Kenya
	Soumano Moumouni: Mali
	Wolfgang Ochaeta: Guatemala
IDEA	Sam van der Staak: Partnership Coordinator, Programmatic Parties, Political Finance, Innovation
	Keboitse Machangana: Partnership Lead
	Frank Kayitare: WPR, ARP conferences
	Catalina Perdomo: Protecting Politics, Colombia
NIMD peers	Ivan Doherty, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Individual peers	Kristen Sample, formerly of International IDEA
	Lars G. Svåsand, University of Bergen
	Greg Power and Nedjma Ouerdane, Global Partners Governance
Others at NIMD	Annemarie Costeris: Fundraising Officer
	Jerome Scheltens: Programme Manager (overall linking and learning)
	Debbie Vermeij: Financial Programme Officer
	Nic van der Jagt: PM&E Coordinator

The documentation and information gathered from interviews was analysed with respect to the overarching questions outlined above. Given the nature of this exercise, the purpose in this inception study has been to define the core issues to be explored, and to refine the focus of the evaluation to ensure that it meets its key objectives in a feasible and realistic way. The authors have used the sub-questions provided in the ToRs for each of these categories as a guide and have elaborated / adapted / refined them in the evaluation matrix submitted as part of the proposal, as well as in the process of carrying out the research for the report itself.

Particular areas of focus included:

- understanding the key factors that make NIMD programmes effective, and that have enabled or hindered the meeting of objectives;
- understanding how NIMD balances its different programme objectives and the priorities of each country programme to have an institutional strategic focus, while also allowing flexibility at the country programme level to respond to changed priorities;
- assessing NIMD's capacity to learn and to adapt its programmes to changing contexts and share learning across country programmes, regional networks and between head office staff;
- exploring how changes to NIMD's internal structure, its funding model, its system for planning at the programme and institutional level, and the development of a Theory of Change (ToC) have affected programme development and delivery, and the incentives and expectations both for NIMD staff at HQ level, and for NIMD's implementing partners in-country;
- assessing current results measures used by NIMD, challenges in measuring outcomes as well as outputs at the country level and institutional level, and the extent to which newly developed monitoring and evaluation tools are supporting NIMD HQ and country partners to capture the impact of their work.

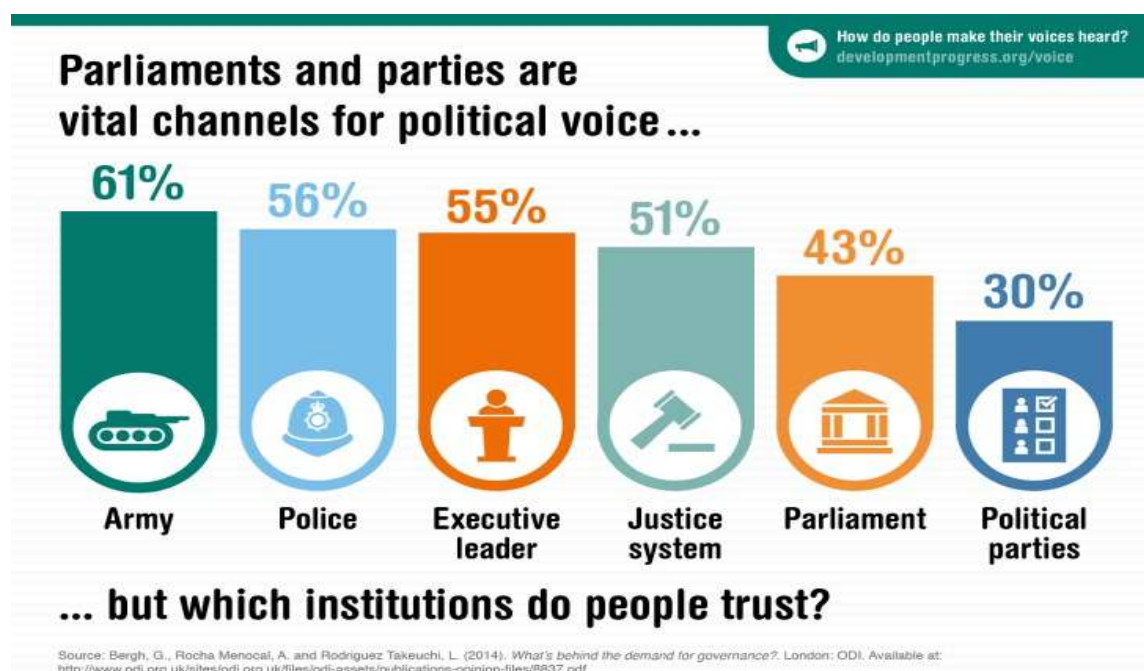
The inception study focused on Questions 1 and 3 above, for which the information in NIMD documents and the knowledge of NIMD head office staff can provide important insights. The authors also sought to answer Question 2 as fully as possible; but more in-depth information on how country programmes operate would need to be gathered through a more intensive process of interviews and engagement with the relevant stakeholders at country level.

## 2. Situating NIMD in the context of political party support

### Why do political parties matter?

Political parties are prime institutions linking state and society and have an essential role to play in a democracy (Carothers 2006; IPU and UNDP 2012). In fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a democracy that can function without them (Rakner et al. 2007). Expectations about what political parties (and parliaments) should deliver have increased tremendously over the past two decades. But across the developing world they remain weak and deeply mistrusted. In fact, political parties are consistently ranked as institutions that people trust the least – and this is true irrespective of income levels.

Figure 1: How trustworthy are institutions perceived to be?



Source: Rocha Menocal (2014a) adapted from Berg et al. 2014

Despite enormous differences in countries and contexts, the problems identified with political parties across different regions of the developing world are remarkably similar. Political parties are often “the weakest link” (Carothers 2006). They tend to be highly personalised, centralised, corrupt, not rooted in society, with weak or top-down organisational management, and opaque funding (Carothers 2006). Moreover, as Carothers has noted, parties are often driven by what he calls “relentless electoralism” – an almost exclusive preoccupation with winning power/elections and competing for access to state resources at the expense of a concern for the public good.

Money in politics (permeating both political parties and the politicians who get elected) has become a pervasive problem. This is true of both legitimate sources of funding and more obscure and shadowy sources that are linked to illegal economic activity and organised crime. Money plays a central role in determining whose voices are heard in the political process. The revolving door between business and politics distorts the language in which political actors operate. When those businesses are illicit, it

further threatens the integrity of electoral processes and undermines the mechanisms for political accountability.

All this is particularly disturbing given that political parties (as well as parliaments) are the preeminent institutions of *democratic* representation and accountability. How to support them so that they can become more effective is a crucial question for actors involved in democracy support. This issue is all the more important as the demand for results and cost-efficiency has grown in donor countries, with expectations of quickly delivered and visible improvements (Wild et al. 2011; Rocha Menocal 2015).

### Lessons from political party support

Support to political parties has been increasing since the 1980s. However, parties remain the smallest components of democracy assistance. An important reason for this is that this type of work has been deemed as too politically sensitive (Barkan 2009; Carothers 2006; Rakner et al. 2007), and there are also fears that donations may be diverted by corrupt activity or even inspire it. Political party development assistance remains an under-evaluated area, which is also true of democracy support more broadly. Even so, there is a clear and remarkably consistent body of lessons and recommendations that has emerged over the past 20 years on this type of assistance. Perhaps the single most important lesson is that political parties and parliaments are deeply political institutions and it is essential, therefore, to move beyond idealised models of how parties ought to work and to develop a more nuanced understanding of how they actually work. There is growing recognition that formal rules and individual and organisational capacity constraints are not the only, or even the most important, determinants of effectiveness – and that the wider system and context in which political parties operate are an integral part of the puzzle (Carothers 2006; Barkan 2009; Rocha Menocal and O’Neil 2012). Other lessons are highlighted in Box 1 below.



### **Box 1: Lessons from political party support**

A number of lessons and recommendations have emerged from donor engagement with political parties over the past 20 years.

- Use in-depth political economy analysis to ensure that programmes are appropriate to context.
- Be realistic about what can be achieved, given the political economy of parties and parliaments, and the scale and timeframes of donor engagement and support.
- Forget any idealised models of what parties and parliaments should look like; work from what is there.
- Base assistance on long-term commitments. This is essential to build trust and lasting relationships with partners.
- Ensure that party and parliamentary strengthening efforts are driven from within organisations themselves or by any other domestic stakeholders interested in reform, such as civil society, and that interventions are tailored accordingly.
- Move away from one-off, random projects towards more strategic and integrated activities/projects/programmes.
- Develop an approach that provides needed technical support, but is also politically savvy.
- Encourage South-South exchange and learning.
- Treat parties and parliaments as part of the broader political system and integrate support with other areas of assistance. Party support and parliamentary support need to be brought closer because political parties are the raw material that will eventually determine the quality of parliaments.
- Build assistance around specific policy issues rather than generic activities.
- Improve programme management (including better coordination, programme design and monitoring and evaluation, more tolerance of risk and more appropriate staff skills and incentives).

*Sources: Rocha Menocal and O'Neil 2013; Rocha Menocal 2015; Foresti and Wild 2010.*

Over the past decade particularly, donors have stepped up their efforts to carry out more fine-grained context analysis (using a variety of tools and frameworks such as political economy analysis and conflict analysis). A greater challenge has been to tailor programmes accordingly. However, there has been growing interest among different international actors in exploring more seriously how to think in a more politically aware manner, and also how to “do development differently”. This means looking for ways to design and adapt their interventions in ways which are locally led, politically smart and adaptive (see Box 2) (Rocha Menocal 2014; Wild et al. 2015; Global Partners Governance 2015). Some innovative work has begun to emerge. This seeks to design and implement more politically aware and context-sensitive programmes – or programmes that engage with the political incentives and structures to achieve change, rather than solely relying on technical support.

## **Box 2: Doing development differently**

There has been a resurgence of interest in trying to grapple with politics and local realities as part of international development policy and programming. There is now broad agreement on some of the core principles that should guide this – support should be problem-driven, not solution-driven; it should be locally led, politically smart, adaptive and entrepreneurial. This was recently summarised in a ‘doing development differently’ manifesto (The DDD Community 2015), which has now been signed by more than 400 people from academia, donor agencies, government ministries, NGOs, and the private sector in more than 60 countries who have an interest in how development is done.

A recent review of experiences of reforms to political institutions, such as political parties, specifically highlights that, ‘the ultimate purpose of all political programmes should be to change behaviour’ (Global Partners Governance 2015). This means changing the attitudes and behaviours of people working within an institution. The experiences gleaned from efforts to do this around the world have again reinforced the extent to which this needs to follow a highly adaptive, iterative and often entrepreneurial approach (Global Partners Governance 2015; Wild et al. 2015). It may mean creating particular pockets of effectiveness and helping to spread positive changes to other parts of the system. For external agencies, it fundamentally means a role as enablers, brokers, and convenors of locally led reform processes rather than as directors or implementers of them.

As discussed in Section 3, NIMD is an organisation that stands out because, since its creation in 2000, it has been perceived to be an organisation at the cutting edge of efforts to work in this way and to take politics seriously, not only in terms of the kind of work that it does but how it does it. As different observers have noted, and as we will describe in greater detail below, much of its model potentially aligns to the calls for more locally led, adaptive and politically smart support described here (Power and Coleman 2011; Rocha Menocal and O’Neil 2012; Global Partners Governance 2013; Keystone Accountability 2014; Schakel and Svåsand 2014).

### 3. NIMD's distinctive model

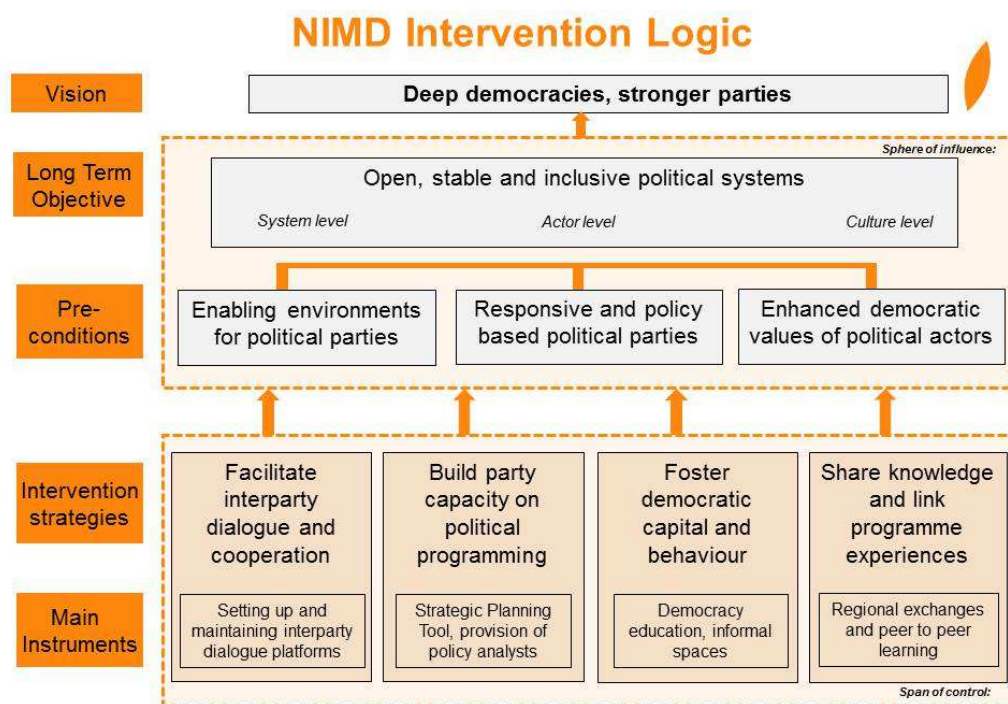
NIMD was created with the specific mandate of strengthening political parties in emerging democracies across the developing world given their crucial role as core pillars of democratic governance. Since then, NIMD has had a distinctive approach to political party strengthening that is elaborated in a variety of different documents, both internal (see, for example, NIMD 2011b, NIMD 2012c, NIMD 2013d, NIMD 2013g, NIMD2014a, NIMD 2015c, among other NIMD documents) and external (Power and Coleman 2011; Speijcken 2012).

NIMD's model reflects many of the lessons of more effective engagement already highlighted in Section 2, and these are clearly captured in the organisation's guiding principles:

- *Impartiality*: NIMD's approach is non-partisan. The organisation not affiliated with any specific political denomination, and it works with all parties.
- *Inclusiveness*: NIMD aims to provide a platform for discussion for all political parties, including those in government and those in the opposition. The intention is to enable them to take part in a dialogue on issues of national interest on an equal standing.
- *Diversity*: NIMD encourages the participation and representation of groups that have traditionally been marginalised, especially women and young people, so that they can also take part in the policy-making process.
- *Local ownership*: NIMD programmes are intended to be locally defined and owned to reflect domestic demands.
- *Long-term commitment*: Recognising that political transformation, building trust and strengthening political parties takes time, NIMD endeavours to invest in long-lasting relationships with its local partners and political parties.

NIMD seeks to strengthen the quality of political parties and their effect on democratic governance through a comprehensive approach that focuses on **three different but interrelated levels of engagement**: political and party **systems** (to foster inclusive and representative political systems, especially through dialogue); **political parties/actors** themselves (especially in terms of strengthening the programmatic and organisational capacity of political parties, as well as their ability to engage in dialogue); and **links between political and civil society and political culture** (this emphasis on the promotion of democratic values among political actors was introduced in the 2016-2020 MAP). Figure 2 below, capturing NIMD's recently developed Theory of Change and refined intervention logic, helps to illustrate the links between NIMD's three programme objectives. These objectives are not stand-alone; they are strongly interrelated.

Figure 2: NIMD's Theory of Change (NIMD 2014a)



NIMD states that it has explicit political ends to facilitate changes at these different levels. This is reinforced by a commitment to political economy analysis and politically aware programming. NIMD thus sees its role as facilitating local agendas and a change in processes, rather than as directly implementing projects. On the basis of the principles outlined in Figure 2, which reflect many of the lessons highlighted in Box 1 about what is needed to make political strengthening efforts more effective, NIMD works in different countries in one of three ways; the choice of approach is based on an analysis of what is feasible and realistic. NIMD prefers to work with and through domestic organisations and NGOs, providing they are impartial, inclusive, and have the necessary capacity. Where NIMD has not been able to find a domestic organisation to partner, it has either worked with domestic political parties to create Centres for Multiparty Dialogue or has opted to open a country office. The breakdown of NIMD country programmes is as follows:

- **6 partner organisations/NGOs:** Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Indonesia, Ghana, Egypt, Burundi;
- **3 Centres for Multiparty Dialogue (CMDs):** Kenya, Malawi, Mali;
- **10 NIMD Country Offices:** Benin (jointly with AWEPA), Colombia, Ecuador ((jointly with IDEA), El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mozambique, Myanmar (jointly with DEMO Finland), South Caucasus (in Georgia), Uganda.

NIMD seeks to develop programmes in-country that reflect its different objectives, such as interparty dialogue, legitimate political parties, fruitful links between political and civil society and now, in the forthcoming MAP (2015c), a democratic culture. However, it does not use a standard approach, but tailors its programmes to the context. Increasingly, NIMD does not start with multiparty dialogue but rather with a focus on fostering better interaction among key stakeholders which is more conducive to democratic culture – as in Tunisia and Myanmar, for example. NIMD also works in countries where

inclusive interparty dialogue can be very difficult (Egypt and South Sudan), or where it is not workable due to a one dominant party system (Mozambique, Ecuador and, in the past, Bolivia), and these programmes need to be adapted to those circumstances. Often, NIMD will focus on trying to ensure the inclusion of women and/or young people in political processes. In addition, NIMD has also started to focus on ensuring that dialogue has both intrinsic and instrumental value. As a result, as will be discussed in Section 4, it has increasingly sought to facilitate dialogue based on specific themes, and has also taken steps to ensure that dialogue doesn't begin and end with political parties/actors but also involves other valuable stakeholders, especially in civil society. NIMD programmes also support South-South learning and exchange through activities like the training of trainers and political brokerage provided by politicians, sometimes from Dutch political parties but often from across the developing world.

## 4. NIMD's programmatic achievements<sup>1</sup>

As already discussed, NIMD has been recognised as developing an innovative approach to political party support. Its model is grounded on key guiding principles reflecting many of the lessons that have emerged over the past 15 years for more effective support, and it is based on a comprehensive approach that seeks to address three distinct but interrelated levels of change: systemic, organisational, and individual. Nevertheless, NIMD also confronts significant challenges. This section explores some of the organisation's most significant achievements along its three core objectives, while also looking at ongoing concerns/difficulties and how NIMD has sought to address them. The section ends with a discussion on sustainability, looking once again at some of the achievements in this area as well as ongoing challenges.

### Functioning multi-party dialogue

The first NIMD objective, set out in its MAP 2012-2015, which distinguishes it from other democracy strengthening organisations, is to support “**functioning multi-party dialogue**”. This reflects a commitment to dialogue between all political parties in order to facilitate greater trust among parties, and a process of consensus-building on shared concerns (NIMD 2011b). Dialogue between all parties is therefore used to provide space to discuss issues of shared concern, identify and developed shared ‘system’ reforms, and to ‘normalise’ interaction between parties often otherwise characterised by mistrust and polarisation.

#### *Evidence of impact*

Some of the prominent examples of impact cited in the different documents we reviewed and/or were mentioned by the people we spoke with are outlined below. A key message that emerges even from this desk review is that there is a lack of evidence on outcomes which might sit further along the intervention logic. There is a need, for instance, to better capture and document policy changes and evidence of changed behaviour in individuals and parties, and how this in turn leads to better outcomes (such as more policy agreement or more peaceful interactions or transitions). This caveat notwithstanding, it is possible to identify some of the key achievements in this area of multi-party dialogue.

Firstly, there is widespread agreement, both within NIMD and among external observers, that sustained support for cross-party dialogue is contributing to better processes and interaction between parties in several countries.

**Ghana**, for example, (although NIMD's contribution cannot be exactly calculated here because of the broader environment) is seen as something of a model for peaceful transitions of power between parties. **Uganda** provides an interesting comparison, offering a far less enabling environment because the ruling party is resistant to cross-party coordination. Here, however, NIMD's work does point to examples of facilitating greater interaction between parties and developing a more competitive party system. This includes efforts of the multiparty platform that have contributed to a large capacity-

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<sup>1</sup> This section aims to provide an overview of achievements in NIMD's main programmatic activities by drawing on internal reports, external evaluations and findings from interviews. We have sought to highlight some of the most illustrative examples, but did not intend to recreate the information provided in the different reports reviewed. It is also worth noting that most of the information captured in the different NIMD documents is qualitative in nature, no quantitative information is available in a consistent or systematic manner.

building programme for opposition parties and which was supported by the President and approved by both the Secretary General of the ruling party and the then Prime Minister. Similarly, in **Mozambique**, the dominance of the main party means NIMD cannot currently facilitate a stand-alone centre for multiparty dialogue. Instead, NIMD has been able to work flexibly with each party to help build greater trust.

The 2014 annual report from the **Georgia** South Caucasus programme highlights a regional forum of the South Caucasus that brought together 30 young politicians from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss democratic developments in the region. According to the report, “the biggest result is that after three days of conference, the young politicians had developed a sufficient level of trust to cooperate with each other in working groups and to make plans for the forum in 2015. Especially between Armenians and the Azeris this is ... exceptional” (NIMD 2014g).

Similarly, as noted in the 2013 Annual Report, in **Honduras**, NIMD together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organised a series of thematic multiparty meetings on political party law throughout the year, inviting experts from Latin America to stimulate parties to get to know each other and exchange points of view and, eventually, come to consensus and adopt agreements (NIMD 2013a). As a result of these meetings, the parties, accompanied by the UNDP, produced and signed a “Commitment for Minimum Guarantees for Ethical and Transparent Elections” in August 2013.

Secondly, NIMD has made considerable efforts to remain engaged in highly volatile areas such as **Mali** and has shown an ability to respond and adapt the approach. Within Mali, the NIMD platform is viewed by some partners as the only space for cross party discussion on how to improve democratic processes, such as using this kind of dialogue to better support the rules and regulations for interaction among different parties (especially the opposition), and the better conduct of election campaigns. However, the Mali platform is not yet fully inclusive. Political groups in the north are not taking part in the dialogue, and it is essential they do if issues of peace and security are to be tackled comprehensively.

The NIMD report also gave examples of newer interventions in more fragile settings, including in relation to the “Arab Spring”. In **Tunisia**, for instance, the Centre des Études Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) has been established and developed innovative approaches, including their “political couscous” strategy which brings parties together informally. Again, the aim is to build greater trust and help normalise interactions as a first step in the process of working towards an inclusive platform for multi-party dialogue and cooperation.

### *Issue-based dialogue*

Our interviews with NIMD staff and stakeholders show that multi-party dialogue on specific issues or problem areas has become increasingly prominent within NIMD’s work. This has been essential to avoid purely facilitating dialogue for its own sake, and to link it to specific interests and priorities that parties share. Examples include constitutional reforms to level the playing field (Kenya), electoral reforms (Uganda), public funding for political parties (Uganda), improvements to the water supply (Benin), and women’s political representation (Georgia). In some instances, thematic dialogues bring together not only political parties but also other civil society stakeholders, as in the case of environmental security (especially in Latin America). In this way they also help to work towards NIMD’s

third objective of more fruitful dialogue between political and civil society. Some of this report's interviewees also emphasised that issue-based dialogue platforms are generating clearer results than permanent dialogue platforms (for instance, in Guatemala). The kind of results achieved through this more thematic focus would be worth exploring further, especially at country level.

### *Enabling factors for multi-party dialogue*

This initial desk review also helped to identify a number of factors that seem to be effective in facilitating multi-party dialogue.

- The first is a commitment to initiatives that are genuinely locally led. NIMD is known for not trying to impose its own agenda, but rather trying to enable parties to identify issues for themselves. This approach seems to have been crucial in establishing effective working relations and supporting the establishment of party platforms. In some cases (such as Mali) this seems to have been helped by the commitment to link inter-party dialogue as a necessary condition for accessing support for party strengthening.
- NIMD also uses an approach based on using informal settings, sometimes behind “closed doors”, as part of trust building. This seems to have been important both in fragile settings (such as Zimbabwe) and in contexts with a very dominant ruling party (such as Uganda).
- It is also necessary to have well-rooted local organisations to work with to establish effective cross party platforms (such as in Ghana) and a wide and varied network of political contacts. In some instances, individuals have also played this role, as was the case with the former Prime Minister in Uganda.
- Another enabling factor is the availability of more flexible funding, allowing partners to adapt activities and action plans as needed.
- Issue-based dialogue offers the possibility of achieving more focused and concrete results than more broad-based dialogue.
- Some interviewees also highlighted the role of NIMD as a knowledge broker, offering lessons and insights from other countries as support.

However, it was not possible to test and compare these findings at this stage. It is therefore not possible to formulate firm conclusions about which factors might be more/less essential to make productive multi-party dialogue possible, and these initial findings should remain as hypotheses that will need to be further tested as part of an evaluation effort, especially at the country level.

### *Ongoing challenges*

A number of key concerns that may be worth investigating further at country level were also identified. These include:

- tensions between ensuring a sufficiently flexible response to context (including, for example, adapting to changing conditions) and responding to requirements of donors funding country programmes, and which remains a challenge because some donors are not yet ready to support more politically agile programming;
- tensions between funder requirements and maintaining longer term strategic vision and planning;
- issues related to the measuring of results and documenting processes;



- questions of sustainability and implementing exit strategies (which may be difficult where there are longer term relationships well established); and
- questions about the broader context and enabling environment, including the constraints of working on multi-party dialogue in de facto dominant party regimes.

These are key concerns that may be worth investigating further in evaluation efforts at the country level.

### Legitimate political parties

NIMD's second objective for the 2012-2015 MAP period is to contribute to the legitimacy of political parties. As stated in the MAP 2012-2015 (NIMD 2011b: 12), NIMD's aim is to improve the **policy-seeking capacity of political parties**. This is based on NIMD's understanding that political parties are often not trusted by citizens and that many parties do not produce coherent policies, draw on citizens' interests to develop manifestos, or have internal democratic structures.

NIMD therefore assumes that "parties seem to lack the capacity to *aggregate* and *articulate interests* of the electorate" (NIMD 2011b:16). To address this problem, NIMD aims to help parties to improve their internal functions by offering, in particular, training in policy development, negotiation, and strategic planning. The NIMD report says: "By combining the assistance to parties in their core organisational functioning related to parties' policy capacity (Objective 2), together with a facilitation of interaction with other democratic actors and specifically civil society and citizens (Objective 3), parties become more trusted and thus ultimately more legitimate." (NIMD 2011b: 17) NIMD also assumes that by assisting parties to develop their own policies, they will then be encouraged to use policy to guide their decisions, although it is recognised that this is not necessarily the case.

### Evidence of impact

Achievements in this area of work have been noted in NIMD's internal reports and in interviews with NIMD programme staff. The strategic planning tool, in particular, designed to assist parties to improve their planning, was highlighted in interviews and in NIMD's 2013 Annual Plan as a way of achieving this objective (NIMD 2013a). The following examples are drawn from NIMD reports and evaluations and thus describe how NIMD staff perceive success has been achieved in improving the legitimacy of political parties:

**Kenya:** According to NIMD's 2013 Annual Plan, the strategic planning tool was applied successfully to assist 10 Kenyan parliamentary parties to develop strategic plans (NIMD 2013a). This process was considered successful because it resulted in each party developing a strategic plan outlining goals to be developed and it is expected that the parties will draw on their respective plans to seek party support.

**Uganda:** The mid-term review of NIMD's programme in Uganda reported that direct capacity support to parties resulted in tangible improvements to parties' organisational capacity in their headquarters and in their ability to communicate with sub-national levels of their party (Global Partners Governance, 2013). The review noted that the services and resources provided to parties by the Ugandan programme "increased parties' visibility among the Ugandan electorate" and "improved parties' policy-making credentials" (Global Partners Governance, 2013:11). In addition, an NIMD staff member described the recent creation of an environment in which the ruling party was willing to

approve a large capacity-building programme for opposition parties. This is considered a success in itself as it indicates that the ruling party recognises the importance of having a more competent opposition with which to engage on substantive issues.

**Honduras:** As noted in the NIMD 2013 Annual Report, NIMD worked with several organisations to design and deliver a training programme for female electoral candidates (NIMD 2013a). The participants reported that the training programme improved their communication skills and political positioning, and 11 of the participants were elected. Although their success cannot be attributed directly to the training programme, NIMD contributed to this result and continued to work with the elected women to form a legislative inter-party agenda.

**Tunisia:** The NIMD 2012 Annual Report describes the launch of the Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP) as a success (NIMD 2012b). Parliamentary parties were invited to send their youth members for training at the school's weekend sessions. The response was high, resulting in participation by 10% of all national Constituent Assembly members, as well as presidential advisors, vice presidents of parties and other high level party members.

**Malawi:** The NIMD 2012 Annual Report describes the success of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy in Malawi in pushing for consensus between political parties on a new regulation and registration act for political parties (NIMD 2012b). Although there was initial resistance from political parties, consultations and revisions have now led to broad support for the regulatory framework.

**Georgia:** In 2012, the country programme in Georgia created a website for its multiparty programme. The website was developed with the cooperation of all the main political parties and they have been trained in how to use the website. According to the 2012 NIMD Annual Report, the website has attracted over 10,000 unique visitors (NIMD 2012b).

**Colombia:** The NIMD 2012 Annual Report describes the success of the Colombia country programme in delivering bilateral political training sessions for militants noting, for example, that 54 militants participated in a training course on legislative processes (NIMD 2012b). The Colombia programme also carried out an interactive study of political party statutes which compared them with a new party law. Suggestions to reform the statutes in line with the law were made and five of the seven parties involved amended their statutes accordingly.

### *Findings from the NIMD thematic evaluation on political parties*

A further important source of information on NIMD's achievements in increasing the legitimacy of political parties is the evaluation by Schakel and Svåsand of NIMD's Direct Party Assistance programme between 2002 and 2012 (Schakel and Svåsand 2014). The evaluation reported that NIMD's work in this area is often greatly valued by beneficiary parties and can increase trust between the participating parties and NIMD and its local partners. However, comparing progress across parties, the evaluation notes varying degrees of success and the importance of numerous contextual factors in the ability of NIMD's work to achieve its intended impact. The evaluation concludes that "NIMD's support has, in general, not resulted in very substantive improvements in parties' institutional and policy capacity" and so has not resulted in developing "well-functioning" political parties (Schakel and Svåsand 2014.: 51). Importantly, the evaluation notes that direct support to parties does not appear to be effective for bringing about structural changes within parties or the wider political system and so is unlikely to contribute to NIMD's primary objective of supporting the development of well-functioning multiparty

democracies. This weakness was also noted in the mid-term review of NIMD's Uganda programme which, regarding the impact of direct support to parties, stated "we have not yet seen evidence of how these have translated into the wider Ugandan political process" (Global Partners Governance, 2013:11).

Two particularly significant recommendations emerged from the Direct Party Assistance evaluation; one suggested focusing less on strengthening the internal structure and organisation of parties and more on their ability to develop policies, and the second identified the need for more relevant data to enable a more detailed assessment of the impact of this work.

With respect to the first recommendation, the Direct Party Assistance evaluation notes that the 2012-2015 MAP places greater emphasis on policy development skills for parties and strengthening the party system. This is also reflected in NIMD's 2013 Annual Report which states that resources for this area of work have been focused on assisting parties to develop strategic plans (NIMD 2013a). NIMD's development of the strategic planning tool, drawing on the experience of the Georgia and Mozambique programmes, demonstrates this shift in focus. Beyond this, however, there is little documentation assessing whether this change in approach to political party support has achieved greater impact than previous activities. Reflecting on the value of this change in focus would be a useful area to examine further, especially at the country level.

To do this, the second recommendation from the Direct Party Assistance evaluation which calls for more relevant data is evidently important (NIMD 2014b). The evaluation notes that it was virtually impossible to judge accurately the impact of support to political parties on the "very large and complex goal of supporting a well-functioning multi-party democracy" (Global Partners Governance, 2013:51). It appears from country reports and interviews that progress has yet to be made on developing appropriate indicators for measuring mid-level outcomes in this area of work. For example, the Georgia/South Caucasus 2014 annual report describes giving training to political parties but does not comment on the outcomes or impact of this training (NIMD 2014g). Developing appropriate outcome indicators and recording data will be very important for future evaluations to assess in more detail the impact of NIMD's work on political party strengthening and the intended impact of this on strengthening multiparty democracies.

### *Ongoing challenges*

More broadly, important questions remain regarding the possible effectiveness of this strand of NIMD's work. For example, one country partner commented that it felt the need for more guidance on how best to build the capacity of political parties, and this reflects the need for more monitoring of results to establish what kinds of activities are most effective. Furthermore, considering the finding from the Direct Party Assistance evaluation that direct support to parties does not appear to result in better functioning multiparty democracies, NIMD may wish to examine to what extent its current approach to strengthening political parties reflects lessons learnt in recent research and theory on political party engagement. It might also like to look at whether support for strategic planning and policy development follows the logic presented in its Theory of Change (NIMD 2014a). For example, while the MAP 2012-2015 states that "parties seem to lack the capacity to *aggregate* and *articulate interests* of the electorate" (NIMD 2011b: 16), NIMD could consider reasons other than a lack of capacity for why parties may not develop policies based on the interests of the electorate, reflecting on the way in which patronage systems shape the incentives of parties and politicians to seek funding

and voter support in other ways. Again, these are all issues that we could only begin to identify as part of this inception study, and they would need to be further examined and tested as part of a broader evaluation effort, especially one that is thematically and/or country-programme focused.

### **Fruitful interaction between political and civil society**

The third objective that NIMD identified in its 2012-2015 MAP, as presented in the intervention logic, is, “**Fruitful interaction between political and civil society**” (NIMD 2011b). As explained in the MAP, focusing on the links between political parties and other groups in civil society and fostering more fruitful engagement between them is essential to build trust and increase the legitimacy of political parties in the eyes of the population. Improved links between parties and civil society can, in turn, have important feedback effects on NIMD’s two other programmatic priorities, because it can contribute to the dialogue process (Objective 1) and encourage parties to sharpen their focus on the public good through policies that respond to the needs of citizens (Objective 2).

#### *Fit within NIMD*

Ironically, NIMD has consistently tried to remove an objective related to linkages with civil society from its multi-annual plans. This has been rooted in intense soul-searching about what NIMD’s niche and very identity should be. There has been robust internal debate about whether engaging with stakeholders other than political parties is within NIMD’s core mandate (see more on this below), as well as whether strengthened linkages between political and civil society are not better seen as somehow implicit (sub-) objectives of the task of fostering legitimate parties rooted in society and able to engage in multi-party dialogue. However, in each instance in which this has been tried, the MFA has requested that some kind of ‘Civic-relations’ objective be reinstated. Reflecting these various tensions and unresolved issues about how NIMD might be best placed to engage with civil society (or not), this objective has been further redefined in the forthcoming MAP, and it has been shifted from promoting “fruitful interaction between political and civil society” to “promot[ing] democratic values and behaviour among political actors”. This has placed political parties squarely at the centre of this objective, while the idea of encouraging engagement between political parties and civil society has been mainstreamed across NIMD’s three core objectives. As articulated in the forthcoming MAP (2015c): “At all three levels [system, political party or actor, political culture or individual], strategic links and interactions with relevant stakeholders in society need to be established to ensure that citizens are more involved in politics and the support base for the political and policy reform agenda is further strengthened.”

#### *Evidence of impact: Democracy Schools*

Perhaps ironically as well, this third objective of promoting fruitful linkages between political and civil society is an area in which NIMD has been able to achieve important results, even if these remain problematic in some ways (see more on this below). The most significant mechanism through which NIMD has tried to encourage more fruitful linkages between political parties and other groups in civil society are democracy schools, where civic and (future) political leaders are trained in basic democracy skills, are described in greater detail below. There have been a few other efforts to work towards this objective beyond democracy schools, and these are also addressed briefly below, but as discussed with a few of our interviewees, these have remained more limited and information about them is also more scattered.

Within NIMD, there is still quite a bit of internal argument about what democracy schools are. However, there is agreement on some basic characteristics – see Box 3.

**Box 3: Democracy school characteristics**

- Long-term settings, (3+ months) (to contrast them from one-off trainings) with frequent (for example, monthly) sessions;
- A curriculum consisting of a multitude of modules to prepare you for the all-round ‘metier’ of politics in all its aspects (to again contrast it from one-off trainings on one precise topic);
- A focus on (exposing/transferring) knowledge, values and skills;
- An interactive, participatory and exploratory modern/adult learning style; discussion, group-work, learning by doing, using a mix of visual, auditory and tactile approaches;
- A strong emphasis on learning outside class through implementing real-life projects;
- The ambition to create and support an active alumni community which can further promote the lessons learned and become democracy-minded players in public life.
- The objective of collaboration and exchange between different types of participants (whether from different sectors of society, or different political parties).

*Source: Internal NIMD document used in Linking & Learning week on democracy schools/political education, April 2015*

This is an area of engagement that has expanded considerably within NIMD, with democracy schools or dedicated democracy education/training courses in Burundi, Egypt, Georgia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Tunisia. Since the first school was opened in Indonesia, some 3000 have been through them, and many of these alumni are now active in politics (NIMD 2015c). However, there is considerable variation in terms of the types of participants who are involved in these democracy schools, especially in the mix established between political party and non-political party participants. In Indonesia, for instance, a majority (75%) does not come from political parties, whereas schools in Mali and Myanmar consist almost entirely of party cadres, with Georgia and Mozambique falling somewhere in-between (NIMD 2015d). Indications from various people we spoke with at NIMD is that, going forward, democracy schools will be much more explicitly focused first and foremost on political actors, and civil society actors are to be incorporated only in the measure that they relate to political actors (see also NIMD 2015d). It is worth noting that, where democracy schools are made up almost exclusively of politicians and do not incorporate other members of civil society, the schools then become mechanisms to foster multi-party dialogue (NIMD objective 1) and to develop the skills and capacities of political parties (which is related to NIMD objective 2), rather than specifically contributing to Objective 3 on the linkages between political and civil society.

Some of the most notable achievements in this area of democracy education that we were able to identify in both our review of documents and the interviews we conducted are highlighted below.

**Egypt:** Here, as in Indonesia originally, democracy schools have been the main entry point for NIMD. Two pilot schools were set up in 2012, in collaboration with the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute

(DEDI), the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD) and two domestic organisations in Egypt. Both (one in the rural Nile Delta, and one in greater Cairo) had mixed groups from political parties and civil society organisations. The Egyptian organisations have created a uniform Egyptian democracy education curriculum, to be used in a second pilot and to be turned into an e-learning curriculum, in order for democracy education to reach more people. It would be useful to evaluate how this has evolved and its effect so far.

**Indonesia:** NIMD's first democracy school provided a crucial entry point for NIMD. Its introduction reflected considerable political savvy, flexibility, and adaptability on the part of NIMD, as without it, political sensitivities would have meant no engagement in the country at all. The school now has approximately 800 alumni engaged in pro-democracy efforts. The 2009 Indonesia country programme evaluation also found that the school (NIMD 2009):

- 'successfully shared [the] knowledge, values and skills of democracy in the locations in which schools are operating;'
- 'developed and applied innovative adult education methods, including a focus on out-of-class projects;'
- 'provided information, training and encouragement for local young political activists.'

It also found that the programme has benefited from the commitment, skill and social capital of strong local partners; a careful, considered process for recruiting and selecting students; and competent and reputable national and local facilitators and resource persons.

**Guatemala:** The Guatemala democracy education programme was originally only for MPs and their staff. Its success led to increased demand not only from parties but also from civil society actors. An important achievement has been increasing the capacity of political actors in the country's interior, especially in areas with a predominant indigenous population, who have not traditionally been NIMD's main stakeholders, and who are currently almost absent from national politics. There has also been greater openness towards NIMD's work from political actors at national level and in the interior of the country, largely as a result of the democracy school, and this is considered an important sign of success.

**Mozambique:** The 2013 evaluation found that:

"On several occasions during the assessment meetings, participants noted that the schools enabled them to constructively discuss politics with their political opponents and that this is something they would have never thought possible before." (NIMD 2013c)

Participants also reported that they gained self-confidence, learned leadership skills, gained positions in their municipal government or set up their own associations, all of which in turn were deemed to contribute to a stronger civil society which was more aware of democratic principles, and better able to engage with political parties.

**Burundi:** According to the 2013 Annual Report, the Democracy School programme continued in the provinces of Cibitoke and Giheta and opportunities for alumni of the programmes to meet and exchange experiences were organised. This programme was planned to be expanded to cover six

additional provinces and to begin engagement with local police. Plans to conduct an external evaluation of this programme to inform the programme's expansion, have not yet been carried out.

**Ecuador:** As highlighted in the 2013 Annual Report, the country programme in Ecuador worked with the National Association of Rural Women to train 25 female rural leaders in facilitation skills – the skills of shaping and guiding the process of people working together. Some of these women, working with the existing political school, then set up a women's political school in the province of Loja. The school aims to address a number of issues including conflict management, violence against women, and citizens' participation in politics. While the establishment of this school cannot be attributed solely to NIMD's work, it is an indication of the training programme's long-term impact in increasing a country's own capacity to improve its political system. The project also shows important synergies with other NIMD objectives, especially in terms of strengthening the capacity of political parties, as well as addressing cross-cutting themes such as gender and diversity, and security.

**Myanmar, Ecuador, and others:** Education efforts set up with an explicit focus on including women and youths. This also has helped to build synergies with the Gender and Development theme within NIMD (see Section 4 on cross-cutting themes), as well as strengthen the internal capacities of parties and to promote multiparty dialogue (see point above on this).

However there are also important challenges related to democracy schools. These include:

- The measurement of results is very much based around outputs/activities, while there is relatively little evidence gathered about higher level outcomes. The evidence also tends to be anecdotal and ad-hoc.
- Data, such as that from tracking alumni, needs to be collected more effectively and consistently.
- There is a lack of monitoring beyond numbers. It is important to understand whether the views and behaviour of participants have changed, perhaps becoming more tolerant of others with different views? Has the experience inspired them to run for office or become leaders in other ways?
- Democracy schools need to be much more explicitly linked to the ToC, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation tools and MAP.
- Tension between allowing each school to fit a specific setting and the need to establish more uniformity across the schools to have a more specific (NIMD) identity.
- There is also a need for greater strategic coherence and for incorporating other mechanisms that may be helpful in fostering a more productive interface between political and civil society more fully and systematically.

It was not possible as part of this inception study to test and compare these findings at this stage. It is therefore not possible to formulate firm conclusions about these challenges, and these initial findings should remain as hypotheses that will need to be further tested. It would be useful to examine them in a more focused manner through thematic evaluations and country-level evaluations.

#### *Evidence of impact: other initiatives*

NIMD has also engaged in other efforts to encourage fruitful interactions between political and civil society beyond democracy schools. Some of the most significant or illustrative ones that we were able

to identify through a review of documents and discussions with interviewees are outlined below (though available evidence seems to be less systematised):

- The four-year (2012-2016) **Reconstruction programme on environmental security in Latin America** (El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia), undertaken in collaboration with Cordaid, is intended to facilitate dialogue between political and civil society actors on issues related to environmental governance and security. Until now there has been little interaction and collective engagement between the two on these issues, and political parties, in particular, have not incorporated them into their programmes. NIMD focuses on increasing capacities of parties in this area (which is also linked to Objective 2) and also on facilitating inter-party and inter-sectoral dialogue on relevant legislation. Although there have been considerable challenges in implementing this reconstruction programme (as mentioned in annual reports), one positive result has been the training of staff in the El Salvador Environment Ministry, enabling them to engage in dialogue with relevant stakeholders. They have also created their own conflict-solving unit.
- A series of public hearings between MPs and local communities on service delivery and other development issues in 16 different locations across **Benin**.
- In **Burundi**, NIMD and the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) have partnered with at least 10 local NGOs on thematic discussions for political parties. The programme has engaged experts from local NGOs as to give input in the thematic workshops for the political parties.
- In **Ecuador**, there have been a series of activities, including dialogue workshops, an interactive website and political training to increase young people's participation in politics. A National Youth Seminar allowed youth representatives from Civil Society Organisations and political organisations to share experiences, and underlined the importance of involving young people in politics.
- In **Ghana**, NIMD's country partner organisation, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) has involved Ghanaian civil society in discussions about constitutional reform and proportional representation. A progress milestone was a retreat held for parliamentarians, political party leaders and CSOs to discuss the report of the constitutional review commission on the government white paper, though the discussion was abruptly postponed.
- In **Latin America** in particular, there have been efforts to work with the media to connect civil society and politicians / political parties (for example, in Ecuador).
- The Centre for Multiparty Dialogue (CMD) in **Kenya** has done a lot of work to try to link up with civil society stakeholders. According to Speijcken (2012) one of the main achievements of the NMID programme there has been to foster societal trust in political parties through the organisation of joint projects between parties and civil society actors and increasing the interface between politicians and citizens, which in turn can increase the potential for enhancing public accountability in Kenya.

However, as can be appreciated from the examples above, with the exception of the reconstruction programme perhaps, there is little coherence between these different initiatives to strengthen the quality of links between political and civil society, and they tend to be rather ad hoc in nature. It is not clear how the whole ("fruitful interactions between political and civil society") adds to more than the



sum of their parts (a set of diffuse activities intended to bring together representatives from political and civil society – while as discussed above democracy schools are an exception to this). As with other examples of impact or effect discussed in this inception report, here the focus continues to be very much on activities and outputs, but how these might connect to higher level outcomes is less evident. Something that may be worth exploring in greater detail through an evaluation, especially at the country level, is whether and how the different mechanisms/activities/components under the objective of promoting more fruitful interaction between political and civil society come together in a strategic and coherent manner, and to attempt to dissect what the effect of these different interventions and efforts has been in helping to influence values, ideas and behaviours among (aspiring) leaders within both political and civil society, and whether and how attitudes towards each other have been altered (especially among youths and women).

## Sustainability

For NIMD, multiparty / inclusive dialogue platforms and other interventions are important steps towards its longer-term objectives. In the medium term, the aim is for these platforms to become institutionalised and financially self-sufficient and for NIMD to withdraw its support. In the long term, the aim is for the platforms themselves to become unnecessary because their function will have been taken over by parliament and its committees. However, NIMD recognises that this is not the only way in which multiparty democracy could improve. NIMD's strategic positioning plan for beyond 2015 describes developing indicators to help assess whether an NIMD programme is adding sufficient value to remain active, or whether it should exit. So, if other changes were to occur which might imply a multiparty platform was no longer needed, the programme would close.

There are three areas of sustainability to NIMD's work: the financial sustainability of country programmes and NIMD head office, the sustainability of NIMD as an organisation in this field, and the sustainability of the outcomes of its work. All three areas were identified as important targets in the 2012-2015 MAP and are interrelated, since delivering sustainable impact is important for programmes and NIMD as a whole to be able to secure future funding.

The different strategies which NIMD uses to promote sustainability are critical to its work and should be tested further in this evaluation process. Some of these issues are explored below. As the discussion below suggests, sustainability should not be reduced simply to funding, though that is clearly important. It is also worth noting that, within the scope of this inception study, we have not been able to delve very deeply into issues of sustainability at the country-level in particular, and the issues addressed here will need to be further explored in evaluation efforts focused on the country level in particular. Issues related explicitly to how NIMD is funded and efforts to diversify its funding base (at the HQ level especially with some insights emerging from the country level as well) are discussed in Section 10.

### *Organisational sustainability*

NIMD's sustainability as an organisation will be greatly affected by how it is perceived externally. To maintain a profile as a relevant development organisation working in an important niche of the sector in effective partnership with in-country partners, NIMD needs to pay close attention to how it communicates its work and impact. The positioning paper for beyond 2015 (NIMD 2013d) recognises this challenge and proposes to sustain NIMD's position by developing its strategic assets, such as its

network of political practitioners from 25 countries, and its deep knowledge of supporting multi-party democracy in post-conflict countries (NIMD 2013d). As noted in the positioning document, strengthening NIMD's relevance and niche is important for its work to be considered interesting to potential funders and partners, and it is therefore an important element of the organisation's sustainability. The interviews with NIMD staff and stakeholders revealed varying perceptions of the relevance of NIMD's work. While some interviewees described the danger of NIMD becoming an implementing, project-focused organisation, others felt that NIMD should strengthen its profile as a knowledge centre, able to provide consultancy services and support to other NGOs' work. The mix of opinions regarding NIMD's external profile suggests that NIMD may need to pay more attention to strategically developing its profile and communicating this effectively.

### *Programmatic sustainability*

The MAP 2012-2015 places a clear emphasis on the financial sustainability of the whole organisation and of country programmes (NIMD 2011b). As described above, promoting NIMD's profile and communicating the relevance of its work to funders is important for this, as is developing a more diverse funding base (see Section 10 for further discussion of fundraising). However, in addition to the financial sustainability of NIMD head office, NIMD country programmes are also encouraged to become more financially self-sustaining. This is important not just for the financial feasibility of NIMD as a whole, but also because this is integral to NIMD's overarching objective of strengthening a country's own ability to support and improve its multiparty parliamentary system. The ability of country programmes to achieve financial sustainability beyond NIMD's core funding is therefore of relevance to NIMD's overall sustainability.

A key message that emerges from the research carried out for this report is that domestic stakeholders involved with the dialogue platforms and centres truly value them, and they therefore are very interested in ensuring that they can become viable and sustainable beyond the support provided by NIMD, in terms of both funding and expertise. Some NIMD country partners and NIMD country offices have increasingly developed an autonomous capacity to fundraise locally (see also discussion in Section 10 on fundraising for more on this) – even if the effectiveness with which they can do this varies.

In some countries, partners seem to be relatively successful at getting funding from a variety of different donors. This is very positive in terms of ensuring the longer-term viability of their programmes. However, it is also important to note that this too can prove challenging if it involves too many donors with different priorities and requirements and systems to account to.

Some country partners have also identified other mechanisms to raise funds at the domestic level beyond relying on NIMD or other donors. In the case of Kenya, for example, the CMD is planning to use income raised by students enrolled in their newly instituted Leadership Institute to expand the organisation and keep it functioning. Members also pay the CMD a membership fee which is not only a contribution to its funds, but is also symbolic of their commitment to the organisation's activities and purpose.

In other cases, NIMD is also encouraging partners/CMDs to secure state funding for dialogue platforms in country programmes. This has been achieved in Tanzania and is an important goal even if it means reduced NIMD influence over country activities. The Tanzanian case illustrates that NIMD's Linking

and Learning programme has provided a lot of value in sustaining an independent platform; it has shared ideas and experiences even as NIMD guidance and support has been decreasing. This has sown the seeds of an ongoing partnership, and NIMD is keen on eventually involving the centre in Tanzania in the international network it is aiming to create. In Mali, too, the centre has begun to look into getting state funds to help consolidate the programme – though this may also generate some tensions, as it may become difficult to maintain neutrality if funding comes from the state. This might, again, need more attention in a country-level evaluation report.

In Guatemala, political parties asked Congress for state financing to ensure the sustainability of multiparty political platform but the initiative was not included in the state budget. Various country partners said that additional support from NIMD would help develop a more sustainable funding base. The NIMD has said that sustainability is sometimes difficult because its partners are not necessarily used to fundraising or eager to do it. However, the introduction of Financial Programme Officers to NIMD's head office has provided much greater support to country programme partners who have largely welcomed their training and advice. This has also meant closer scrutiny of budgets in country programme plans, the collection of more financial information from them, and a resulting improvement in their financial reporting. Gathering more accurate financial information has also meant that country programmes have this data readily available when making funding proposals, and that they can share and compare information with other programmes. This is likely to strengthen the quality of these proposals. Training in financial management and accountancy principles and support for funding proposals is expected to improve the capacity of country partners to be financially self-sustaining.

The aim of increasing the financial sustainability of country partners is to enable a country to support the development and improvement of its own democracy. This means that, ideally, NIMD supports its country partners to develop their activities and internal capacity to the extent that the multiparty political system becomes strong enough to stand alone. However, NIMD has decided to close some country programmes for other reasons, which underlines the challenge of sustaining country programmes financially and operationally in difficult circumstances. For example, the Tanzania programme was successfully passed on to DIPD to lead when the Dutch MFA withdrew funding for it (NIMD 2012b). Similarly, NIMD programmes in Libya and Bolivia were ended due to a lack of funding and very difficult political circumstances (NIMD 2013a). These experiences raise the importance of developing the financial sustainability and organisational capacity of country programmes and also the importance of the need for strong networks with other organisations that could provide additional support to country partners if NIMD is no longer able to do so. These emerging findings need to be further tested as part of an evaluation effort, and special emphasis should be placed on how these different challenges of programmatic sustainability have been addressed at the country level.

### Sustainability of outcomes

The MAP 2012-2015 acknowledges that, in addition to financial sustainability, it is important that NIMD interventions have a sustained impact in their beneficiary countries. However, this is not explained in detail in the MAP. The 2015 Annual Plan does implicitly consider the sustainability of intervention outcomes by describing the expected changes to the political context in beneficiary countries, and the challenges these may pose to programmes. However, neither the NIMD annual plans nor the country annual reports explicitly discuss the sustainability of outcomes. Externally commissioned evaluations, on the other hand, have assessed sustainability; however, they have done

this more in terms of the ability of NIMD or country partners to sustain interventions, such as a dialogue platform, rather than the sustainability of the impact these interventions may have.

Assessing the sustainability of the outcomes of NIMD's work is inevitably very challenging due to the unpredictability of the different country environments and numerous external factors. Nevertheless, more attention should be paid to exploring ways of assessing and analysing this sustainability on the basis of sound and ongoing political economy analysis, in order to understand which activities and approaches are most effective. This would help NIMD to demonstrate the impact of its work more fully, and would be likely to strengthen both future funding proposals and programme plans.

It would also be interesting to see what lessons can be learned by drawing comparisons across regions, and across interventions. Developing appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools for this will be critical. Once again, these emerging findings need to be further tested as part of an evaluation effort, and special emphasis should be placed on how these different challenges of programmatic sustainability have been addressed at the country level.

## 5. Progress on cross-cutting themes

The 2012-2015 MAP (NIMD 2011b) identifies three cross-cutting themes in NIMD's work:

- Gender and diversity
- Security
- Linking development and democracy

These cross-cutting themes are intended to encourage Programme Managers (PMs) to work beyond their own country programmes (several of the people we spoke to mentioned that PMs can often work in silos) and to champion and collaborate with others across NIMD on the different themes. Different working groups and alliances with strategic partners have been formed on these themes at the HQ level (discussed further in this section and also in Section 5 on strategic partnerships). But there are no formal guidelines or strategies to support PMs and NIMD staff more broadly to implement these themes in the country programmes, in large part because there are concerns that such guidance could create tensions between locally-driven agendas and HQ agendas. There is also no formal mandate or instruction from the NIMD management to implement or mainstream them, and there is considerable flexibility for programmes to choose what theme(s) to focus on. From our conversations and review of documents, the picture that emerges is that the application of the themes has been more ad hoc than systematised, and that whether they are used/adopted has considerably depended on the PMs as well as the country context. Thus, it appears that cross-cutting themes need more deliberate anchoring in NIMD policy, decision-making, programming, monitoring and resourcing.

According to NIMD's 2015 Annual Plan, some steps are being made in this direction. NIMD is starting to implement result-oriented teams to develop a greater unity of policy, share responsibilities and provide clearer contributions to NIMD's goals (NIMD 2015a). More formal, thematic teams have also been established to "ensure that knowledge is further deepened and the development of methodologies and instruments is increased". The teams are intended to be organised along the five core themes identified in the forthcoming MAP: (a) Interparty dialogue; b) Programmatic parties; c) Democratic culture; d) Gender & Diversity; e) Political innovation. They are to have a budget to develop knowledge in their areas. In fact, as one informant put it, perhaps one of the most important innovations in the forthcoming MAP is the creation of a Knowledge and Innovation Unit that is intended to provide a clear institutional home for these areas of work, resourced with dedicated staff and working on a clear mandate and terms of reference for the programme managers and partners. However, the Unit should not be taken as given – whether the Unit does in fact add value, how the different theme teams end up working in practice, and how this K&I Unit relates to PM&E efforts more explicitly is something that will need to be assessed and monitored as the new MAP unfolds. It should be evaluated in due course (but not in 2015 because it has not been put into effect).

However, as noted above, there is still a debate about how much guidance is desirable without becoming unduly prescriptive, and how much autonomy and independence the country programmes and PMs should retain. While some may feel that they need formalised mechanisms and guidance, others have said that they will make decisions irrespective of whether or not there is a formal organisational mandate. Management needs to tread a fine line between offering the kind of vision, leadership and institutional incentives/systems that are desired, and providing enough space for PMs

to make their own choices. This is something that could be explored further in a (thematic) evaluation, though the more formal thematic teams are still too new to be assessed effectively.

It seems from the interviews and document review that the cross-cutting theme which has gained most traction under the 2012-2015 MAP is Gender and Diversity. This theme has received considerable attention in recent years, partly because of external factors (such as Dutch pressure and the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security) and domestic pressures for change (such as quotas for parties). Gender has been a priority of country programmes in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, with domestic pressures in each country to promote the participation of women in the political arena. NIMD has endeavoured to support those efforts. Special attention has also been paid to training women candidates. In Honduras, the Academy for Candidates provided women candidates with the skills to campaign successfully. Some 10% of these participants were elected as MPs or alternates in the 2013 elections. In El Salvador, NIMD, together with the Association of Parliamentarians and ex Parliamentarians of El Salvador (ASPARLEXSAI), offers a democracy education programme for women politicians from all parties. This became especially relevant when a quota regulation came into effect during the 2015 elections. This attention to women was echoed in Kenya, where the focus on gender has always been strong, and it was not something that was pushed by NIMD.

Within NIMD, 2014 was designated as the Gender Year, and an inventory of NIMD's work on gender and diversity (Vossenbergh 2014) has concluded that there has been some important progress and results (see Table 3 for a summary of activities and results). The inventory showed that most NIMD PMs take aspects of gender and diversity issues (including young people and ethnic minorities) into account in their programmes and activities. Some PMs, to whom Vossenbergh refers as "NIMD's G&D Entrepreneurs", have made this theme indispensable to their work. As a result, NIMD, in collaboration with International IDEA, has also been able to secure a €2 million grant from the Netherlands for a four-year project on women's political participation in Tunisia, Colombia, and Kenya (WPR). Synergies have also been built between gender and democracy schools in certain countries, focusing on ensuring that a certain number or percentage of participants are women and/or young people (for example in Myanmar and Georgia). Again, however, across NIMD the theme is, in general, pursued in an open-ended, voluntary manner – even if this and the other themes are featured in the MAP and annual plans. As noted by Vossenbergh (2014), there is no formal guidance (for instance there are no mechanisms for G&D risk management and do-no harm policies), and there are no result-oriented mechanisms to monitor compliance or results. The situation is different for the reconstruction project on environmental security (which has an objective around Resolution 1325) and the WPR programme. Both have their own intervention strategy and logframe, and they have their own plans and reporting (although only some of that is included in PP2 annual plans and reports).

**Table 3: Summary of activities and results for the NIMD Gender & Diversity cross-cutting theme**

Source: Vossenbergh 2014 (ppt)

Approach	Activities	Results
Multi-part dialogue	Include theme 'women's political participation' in Strategic Planning Process and dialogue sessions	Gender Task Force Georgia
Capacity building	Support female candidates during election (local + national) Train in leadership, media profiling, political skills Finance women's wings Monitor and document experience of females candidates	"Careers developed" Increased number of women in parties
Legislation and procedures	Assess; parties' compliance with national laws Technical support to parties Finance party lobbying to anchor women's rights in constitution	Party reforms (Kenya) Quota regulations anchored in constitution (Kenya, LA) <i>Femicidio</i> law adopted (Guatemala)
Learning	Conference organised with First Ladies Latin America NIMD Regional conferences Research: expert and policy papers	
Political culture	'Naming and shaming' Technical support to parties to assess informal barriers Sensitise 'male leadership'	"Increased respect for women's rights"
Political education	Political (informal) gatherings Democracy schools (local partners set criteria of representation) Gender & Diversity issues part of training curriculum	"Alumni influence development process" "Kweekvijvers"
Other	Website / Kieswijzer Finance country office staff + admin to drive gender agenda Facilitate and finance dialogue on NAP 1325 Media engagement	"Alliances, solidarity & trust" 1325 not monitored

From the table above, the 2014 stocktake finds that NIMD has proven particularly good at:

- capacity-building of women in politics;
- facilitating dialogue on gender-equality in legislation;
- providing political education to a 'new generation';
- assessing political systems and party structures and the push for reforms.

However, considerable challenges remain in terms of PM&E and the measuring of results in gender and diversity programming. According to Vossenbergh (2014), gender and diversity is not monitored and documented in PM&E, and Linking and Learning activities have no indicators. There is a lack of systematic documentation of results, with most of the evidence tending to be anecdotal. There is also a tendency to focus on numbers, such as the number of women trained or elected to office, and not on what happens to school alumnae. More data is needed on whether they do go on to become political leaders; whether the increased participation of women in the political arena is actually making a difference in the policies and priorities of political parties and elected politicians; and to better understand why or why not. However, as the inventory notes, the Monitoring Framework being developed for the WPR project could improve monitoring and evaluation here, and the Political Economy Analysis tool can be mainstreamed for G&D. A focused thematic evaluation on gender and diversity could provide very useful insights. The research for this report seems to show that the other two cross-cutting themes – security and democracy, and development – had considerably less traction in their implementation in country programmes (with two exceptions - security and electoral violence in Kenya, and the NIMD-Cordaid Reconstruction programme on environmental security in Latin America). It is telling that the cross-cutting themes in the new MAP for 2016-2020 (NIMD 2015c) have been revised. Although gender and diversity remains as a stand-alone theme, the two themes of security and democracy and of development have been turned into sub-themes of other core objectives. Security comes under “Political Culture” and democracy and development under “Interparty Dialogue”. A new theme, “Political Innovation” has been introduced. According to one observer:

“The departing point for this decision, collectively made as part of a protracted internal debate on the 2016-2020 MAP, was that NIMD needs to focus on its core niche and develop deeper knowledge, skills and competences in the three key objective areas to reflect that NIMD is a practitioners’ organisation (as opposed to a policy think tank or academic institute) and that its country programmes (as opposed to its thematic programmes) are the backbone of the organisation. So, for instance, security will still feature prominently, but from the angle of conducting dialogue in conflict-affected settings, and not from the perspective of building up expertise on security.”



## 6. NIMD internal restructuring and change

Since 2007, NIMD has undergone considerable restructuring and change, some of which is reflected in the impacts and partnerships described above. The impetus for internal reform came largely as a result of growing tensions between the NIMD and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), NIMD's main funder. The MFA's institutional evaluation of NIMD (2011b), which focused on the 2007-2010 period, produced several suggestions for improvements in NIMD's organisational set-up and programming. Following some of the recommendations from that evaluation, some of the most significant changes have included:

- removing the direct involvement of Dutch political parties in NIMD, either in terms of management, programming or policy;
- making the NIMD management structure leaner and devolving greater management responsibilities among NIMD staff to encourage greater independence;
- professionalising NIMD's back office and increasing its capacity;
- placing PMs at NIMD's organisational core;
- improving NIMD's internal systems, administrative procedures and strategic planning; and
- enhancing cross-institutional learning and exchange of experiences and information

These different efforts to restructure NIMD as an organisation are analysed in more detail below. However, it is worth noting that many of these reforms are still relatively recent, and it would be difficult to assess at this point what kind of effect they are having. An institutional evaluation of these changes should therefore be undertaken a few years down the line.

As an organisation founded by Dutch political parties represented in Parliament, these parties were intended to play an important role in NIMD from the start, embodying the concept 'from parties, for parties'. The parties were represented on the NIMD board, and were also directly involved in the running of programmes. In addition, in 2007, a new organisational model was introduced which created a structure headed by one executive director, a deputy director (in charge of internal organisation) and three (later two) regional directors. A management team and regional teams, as well as a knowledge centre, were also established (NIMD 2012e). In the process, however, the organisation became quite top-heavy, with a management team of seven for a staff of 30.

Under pressure from the MFA the NIMD, with its very survival at stake, embarked in 2011 on an ambitious process of institutional restructuring. The 2012-2015 Multi-Annual plan aimed to "present the main policy direction and institutional organisation for the NIMD programmes for the coming five years, taking account of global changes, current Dutch foreign policy and incorporating lessons learned from the recently conducted institutional and capacity development evaluation" (NIMD 2011b).

As part of the restructuring, the direct links between the NIMD and the Dutch political parties have been removed. Dutch political parties are no longer responsible either for the management and running of the organisation, or for its policy choices. They are no longer represented at staff level, and the board has been replaced by a supervisory board (responsible for the general supervision of the management of the organisation and the work of the executive director) and an advisory council (to

provide advice to the executive director and the supervisory board on policy matters). Representatives of the various political parties in the Netherlands are now more indirectly involved in NIMD through the Advisory Council.

The organisation's management structure has also been slimmed down, and the number of staff was significantly reduced (from 33 to 21 in February 2011). Since 2013, the new management team has consisted of one Executive Director, a Director of Programmes and a Director of Finance and Business Operations. The regional teams have been merged into one programme team, headed by the Director of Programmes. Meanwhile, since 2015, regional teams have resurfaced again, as "results-oriented teams" – although from conversations we have had with different people at NIMD it is not clear how these "results-oriented teams" relate to the thematic teams.

The back office, for its part, has also been considerably restructured under a Director of Finance and Business Operations who oversees finance, HR and internal organisation management. The addition of a finance director has greatly increased NIMD's capacity and competence in managing its financial operations and has enabled the management team to make policy and business decisions which are far better informed by financial information. Previously, all HR tasks were the responsibility of the executive director's PA, which meant that NIMD lacked basic HR processes such as appraisals and a policy on staff training and learning. Now HR has improved with the recruitment of specialist staff. Although it is beyond the scope of this report to assess the full impact of these changes, it is likely that this has improved staff morale and working conditions. This should improve NIMD's ability to recruit and retain skilled staff, and should enable programme managers to focus more on their core tasks. The staff satisfaction survey conducted in November 2012 shows that average satisfaction levels rose from 6.5 to 7.8 and revealed other improvements in the staff's feelings of pride for NIMD, and satisfaction with their working conditions.

A large number of responsibilities have been handed from management level to staff level and each staff member operates with increased independence. In 2015, the knowledge centre was started organically with thematic teams. The 2011 reorganisation also had a strong focus on placing NIMD's primary process, its programmes, at its core. Programme managers have become the sole managers of country programmes (since political party members are no longer directly involved). Financial programme officers were also recruited to support programme managers and improve the administrative capacity of NIMD. These officers work with programme managers to review budgets and contracts, produce financial reports for each country programme and build the capacity of country partners to manage their finances. This additional support has meant that budget lines are scrutinised; there is now rarely underspend in programme budgets, and spending has to be justified, all of which should improve the cost effectiveness of country programmes and raise the professionalism and credibility of NIMD and its partners.

As a result, NIMD has been able to secure its finances through 2015, and relations with the MFA and NIMD's board have much improved. A relationship based on trust and good communication seems to have been restored as NIMD is now considered a more professional, credible, and competent organisation.

This restructuring has not come without its own set of challenges, however. The substantial reduction of the management structure has meant that key issues outlined in the MAP, related to governance, strategic and knowledge development, PM&E, representation, fundraising and internal management

have not always received the time and dedication needed from the top management (NIMD 2012e). There has also been an increased risk that the programme managers work in isolation from other colleagues, giving rise to what one interviewee referred to as 'an island culture'. As a result, over the past few years NIMD has sought to institute a number of other changes to make the organisation more professional, and improve its internal systems and administrative procedures and strategic planning (including management, project monitoring and evaluation, capturing results, and developing a Theory of Change). It has also taken steps to enhance cross-institutional learning and exchange of experiences and information (NIMD 2012e, NIMD 2011b, and interviews). Introduction of these internal changes has been met with some resistance from staff; some programme managers are not keen to share oversight of their country programmes with financial programme officers who, in turn, face the difficult challenge of acting as budget monitors and financial advisors. However, the changes to the internal structure are still relatively recent and it is to be expected that staff will take some time to adapt to new working practices.

The organisational set-up that remained after the 2011 reorganisation, together with the strategic choices and plans as laid down in the 2012-2015 multi-annual plan, have been the basis for NIMD's operations from 2011 (NIMD 2011b; see also ToRs for this assignment). The review of documents and interviews for this report suggests that NIMD has made important progress in this direction, but there is still some way to go. There is clear evidence that, despite many of these changes being very recent, there have been important improvements in the management of contracts and budgets and overall financial and administrative competence. However, it is too early to tell what kind of impact these changes may have on the quality of country programmes and on the overarching objectives of NIMD.

## 7. Strengthening the evidence base

### Challenges of measuring results

As noted in the 2012-2015 MAP, NIMD, like other organisations in the democracy assistance field, “has fought an uphill battle to establish clear criteria for success and to make the impact of interventions visible” (NIMD 2011b). The MFA also highlighted in its 2011 institutional evaluation of NIMD that the organisation needed to pay more attention to monitoring and evaluation and urged it to work on capturing results better, as well as presenting them in more effective and innovative ways (MFA 2010).

One of NIMD’s most persistent challenges when it comes to showing the impact of its work at all levels (country or institutional) is being able to move from activities and outputs to outcomes, and to measure outcomes more rigorously. Part of the issue – and this is true not only for NIMD but also for democracy strengthening efforts more broadly – is that these are long-term processes of change, and have to do with changes in dynamics, interactions and behaviours which are, by their nature, less tangible and concrete and more difficult to quantify. As one of our interviewees put it:

*“Being flexible and responding to changes means you have to keep reviewing your logframe and the outcomes you identified and see if they are still relevant. It is easy to track activities and outputs against a country annual plan but what is missing is the step between output and high-level outcomes.”*

*“There may not be clear results or even if there are – e.g. a new constitution – working out our contribution to it is difficult. Political processes are non-linear and so it is hard to have a solid monitoring framework and I think that’s acceptable but if you talk about investment value and results, it becomes difficult to calculate cost benefit.”*

Measuring contribution/attribution is also challenging. There is a need to be honest about impacts and to not exaggerate results. It is important to be realistic about what can be expected from relatively small interventions embedded in a much wider context of internal change and transformation. This is how one interviewee articulated this challenge:

*“What is particularly hard for NIMD to measure is counterfactual – what would have been the case if NIMD were not there? For example Ghana has been a success – is this because of NIMD? It is hard to attribute success. There is a need to be humble / modest. The role of NIMD should be to facilitate, assist, so it shouldn’t be claiming credit for all this.”*

And from a country partner perspective:

*“It is easy to measure outputs of our activities but measuring outcomes of constitutional processes, for example, is difficult to measure tangibly. We look at our activities and who we worked with and how, who we met with and how frequently etc. We can see some of our ideas reflected in the constitution. We know we’re not the only ones working on these issues in our country and even if we can’t say directly how much we contributed to changes in the political system, we can get a sense of how we supported the outcomes. We can also look at how our press conferences are received and broadcast to get an indication of our influence.”*

This also means that if countries such as Mozambique or Malawi have not seen substantial improvements in the workings of their political party systems and political parties over the past decade, NIMD's efforts should not be seen as futile. This is especially striking in the case of Mali, for example, where there was a coup in spite of efforts to promote dialogue, but where, nonetheless, the platform has been transforming and finding a new life and ways of linking political actors in the aftermath of the coup.

However, the field of political party assistance has been grappling for some time now with how to attribute and measure impacts better (Rocha Menocal and O'Neil 2012; Wild et al. 2011; Power and Coleman 2011). There is now better appreciation of the need for a renewed results agenda which continuously tests programme logics and tracks outcomes across the results chain. Approaches such as "theories of change", outcome-mapping, process-tracing and more are increasingly used to track the types of outcomes. The following sub-sections of this report document some of NIMD's current reform initiatives to strengthen its monitoring and learning approach. On the basis of this desk review, and given that many of these tools and approaches are still being rolled out, it is difficult to judge their effectiveness. However, interviews and a review of relevant documentation do highlight ongoing challenges in terms of how to best capture results and outcomes. This could be seen in the efforts at multi-party dialogue, highlighted in Section 3 above, for instance.

The results identified for this review are largely anecdotal and ad hoc, but there is evidence of the activity and output, while NIMD also has well-articulated high-level objectives. However, what seems to be missing are mid-range theories and measures of impact, particularly of the behaviour change as a result of outputs/activities which will lead to higher levels of impact. In-country evaluations could be used to identify more clearly some of these and provide guidance on how to strengthen future monitoring. Some questions that country-level evaluations could address include issues such as:

- has the intervention logic developed by NIMD and presented in the 2012-2015 MAP been useful?
- what are the ins and outs of the current system to measure results and what does this look like at the country level?
- what effect are the different innovations developed during the current MAP beginning to have at the country level? What has changed, if anything?

### Innovations in Project Management and Evaluation (PM&E)

The factors outlined above also mean that organisations like NIMD should do more to improve the way in which they estimate the results/impact of the way they work. Project Management and Evaluation (alongside learning) has thus been one of the top priorities within the current MAP period.

NIMD first recruited a PM&E officer in 2009, and the intention was to "ensure that the Programme Managers have the tools needed to plan effectively in the field and support the programmes at key intervals with technical guidance and overall backstopping" (2012-2015 MAP). Since 2013 NIMD has been developing a planning, monitoring and evaluation strategy. The focus has been on developing a PM&E system for NIMD as a whole, with an emphasis on learning and sharing evaluations and experiences within the organisation (Annual Plan 2013 and interviews). A key challenge has been to develop a PM&E system which can monitor outcomes in all programmes but still allows for flexibility, given that country contexts are different and can also change rapidly. As part of this, NIMD has been

engaged in a variety of efforts and has made a substantial investment in different systems, tools and initiatives that are intended to be flexible and adaptable. A “milestones approach” has also been adopted. Process-based milestones are identified for each of the NIMD strategic objectives and activities, or process steps are monitored and assessed for the extent that they were completed or realised. The intention is to have greater flexibility and to focus on a more process-oriented approach that gets closer to the day-to-day way in which programmes work on the ground.

Other tools include the introduction of a new Baseline and Review Toolkit (BART) (NIMD, undated) and the development of a Theory of Change, both discussed later in further detail. All PM&E-related information is being recorded in a new programme management system (Principal Toolbox) introduced in 2013.

It is also important to note that there have been a succession of PM&E coordinators with the fourth, the most recent, starting in October 2014. Many of these tools and systems have been developed only recently and have not been fully rolled out. As a few of our interviewees said, the PM&E system will be implemented in 2016 and so has not yet had an impact on reporting. This has important implications for an evaluation of the 2011-2014 period as it will not be possible to assess if these newly established PM&E efforts have made a difference.

This is something that will need to be monitored from 2016. As one interviewee commented, the development of a PM&E system has taken some time and it will be difficult to mainstream it in an organisation like NIMD which has programmes working separately. Particular attention should be therefore be paid to how coherent the PM&E system is across the organisation, how much traction it gets, how integrated it becomes at the country level, and how useful and adaptable it is perceived to be. This again helps to highlight a tension that will be worth exploring, between flexibility and the formalisation and systemisation of monitoring frameworks.

### Baseline and Review Toolkit (BART) and development of relevant indicators

The BART is a systematised set of tools and methodologies for constructing baselines for new NIMD programmes and for reviewing programmes every three to four years. The BART is not tied directly to the logframe or the milestones outlined above. The tool integrates political elements and organisational aspects to provide a solid baseline for political context indicators and partner organisation capacity indicators, and it is intended to help visualise the complexity involved in the programmes. Two more BART scans are under development: for party capacities and for country programmes. The latter would be more closely linked to milestones, and should allow programme managers to see if strategic objectives are being met over time.

The tool has been piloted in Kenya, Tunisia, and Mozambique. According to a few of our interviewees, BART is a light and easy to use tool, and is also accessible and flexible. It has been well received and feedback has been that it can be useful for programming and operationalisation – even if it is not always detailed or specific and is open to interpretation. As one interviewee put it, the BART “helps to define clearly the problems and shows differences in different staff members’ perceptions of the context and so helps develop common understandings. It also helps to make assumptions in ToC explicit and makes it possible to monitor assumptions.” BART was optional when originally introduced, but became compulsory in October 2014. There are plans to use it in all NIMD’s current programme countries, as appropriate, and by the end of 2015 all programmes are expected to have used BART to

provide a baseline. However, it is also worth noting that the BART is a self-assessment tool, and the way it is used (for example, in terms of the information reported) remains quite flexible. It will be important to consider whether it can be further brought into mainstream use and made more systematic. A targeted M&E exercise could be used to assess the effectiveness of the pilot scheme, the usefulness of the scans, and what lessons emerge from that experience. This could be particularly useful in the context of country-level evaluations.

As one interviewee pointed out, however, it is easier to analyse country programmes than to analyse the impact of political parties. The BART needs another tool that focuses on the outcomes of the work of the programmes. New indicators (including new verification methods to further strengthen the evidence base) are expected to be developed, based on the recognition that not all NIMD country programmes are alike, and neither is the application of tools and methodologies since NIMD does not work on all outcome areas in all its country programmes for context-specific reasons (2015 Annual Plan). The intention is to develop these new indicators in the coming year(s). In developing the indicators, it will also be important to work closely with country partners, as well as manage tensions that may emerge between flexibility and cross-institute coherence/uniformity (see discussion above). In addition, as one interviewee highlighted, it will be important to think about what works for NIMD and what works for the MFA and other donors – for instance, what is an acceptable level of monitoring and what kinds of results to show donors. But again, all this has implications for the kinds of impact/outcomes that an evaluation conducted in 2015 can capture.

The development of indicators is not something that can be done through an evaluation which is better suited to test those indicators once they have been put in place and assess how relevant they are. Instead it should be a process of reflection and engagement with staff as well as in-country partners, peer organisations and donors). This is something that NIMD has been doing through different networks, including the Political Party Peer (PPP) Network. A targeted evaluation exercise could assess how effective this and other initiatives are at developing more suitable indicators for democracy support, but it would be likely to go beyond simply looking at NIMD.

## Theory of Change

Over the past few years, NIMD has made a considerable effort to develop a Theory of Change. This is something the MFA asked the organisation to submit as part of its proposal for continued funding, and it had also been raised in the MFA's 2011 institutional evaluation of NIMD (MFA 2010) (see also Box 4 above). This exercise, which proved more intensive and involved than was at first envisaged, provided an opportunity to unpack and test some of the underlying assumptions informing the work that NIMD does. The ToC discussions helped NIMD staff to discuss their understanding and exchange their views on how they work and why – even if some within the organisation feel the process was more participatory and inclusive than others. As one of the people we interviewed put it,

*“In first three MAPs, NIMD always said ‘democracy will contribute to development of countries’ but ignored the whole debate on what role democracy can play for development goals – now for the first time we acknowledge that NIMD considers democracy to have an intrinsic value which it supports and acknowledges debate on the value of democracy for development ... We believe that this could be met by capacity-strengthening without justifying the reason for this. We are now working to examine other issues around incentives for why*

*policies are developed and so have unpacked some of our assumptions. These changes in staff mind-set have taken a couple of years but are important changes.”*

The ToC has been very well received by the MFA. NIMD has also been able to share its experience of developing a ToC in different fora for peer learning and exchange. As mentioned by some interviewees, the ToC also seems to be a more flexible and user-friendly tool than the more traditional logframe.

Since it was developed relatively recently, however, the ToC did not feed into the 2012-2015 MAP but will affect the new MAP. It is therefore not possible to assess how the ToC helped inform the 2012-2015 MAP priorities and objectives, or how it has been integrated at the country level and/or has functioned as a basis for providing guidelines and operational principles to serve staff in developing, implementing, managing and assessing/monitoring country programmes. Looking at how it has affected NIMD’s programmes in the 2011-2014 period is therefore premature. Some interviewees emphasised that translating the ToC into a “results measurement framework” is the task for the next MAP (2016-2020), and it has been fully incorporated into that multiannual plan.

This will need to entail tailoring the ToC to different country settings to ensure it is used to inform the MAPs for each country, and integrating the ToC more fully with other tools and systems that have also recently been adopted (for instance, linking the BART toolkit and the ToC to make it more operationalised in each country programme). Having a ToC also does not guarantee that people within NIMD will work in a more collaborative way across the organisation. Curiously, for instance, the ToC does not explicitly incorporate the two cross-cutting themes that have been selected for the forthcoming MAP (Gender and Diversity has been mainstreamed in the ToC), which might make it more difficult to use as tool for generating knowledge and the sharing of experience across these areas. In addition, as one interviewee noted, there is a risk that country programme managers don’t engage with the ToC and continue to work as they have up to now, given that they are so independent and autonomous. (This is, in principle, a good thing but can also mean that common organisational goals are diluted.) Another issue, which did not come out very strongly in either the document review or the interviews for this report, is how the ToC can be tested in different settings and be altered as needed to continue to inform programming. This is important because ToCs are not meant to be static documents but rather live tools that enable reflection, learning, and adaptation.

This report’s research also suggests that the ToC is more of a head office tool, and its development has not yet had an impact on the way country offices and partners work. But this again may be a function of the fact that the ToC is not part of the 2012-2015 MAP. One of the country partners interviewed, for example, said that they have agreed to use the ToC to measure the progress of their programmes. It will be important to observe in the coming years whether, with the new MAP (2016-2020), the ToC does, in fact, get real traction at the country level and to understand why it does or does not. An institutional evaluation this year will not be able to measure that, but country-level evaluations might.

## Other results

In addition to the PM&E work outlined above, NIMD has also engaged in other efforts to evaluate and learn from some of the work it has done over the past few years. In fact, according to one expert we spoke with, NIMD may be unique in this as “no other organisation in this field seems to have such a



systematic call for evaluations.” Table 1 in Section 1 provides a list of the different evaluations – country programme, thematic, and institutional – that NIMD has undertaken since 2003.

During the period covered in this inception report, NIMD commissioned a thematic evaluation in 2014 to look into the results of its Direct Party Support between 2002-2011 (Schakel and Svåsand 2014). According to several people interviewed for this report, most of the recommendations made in this evaluation were included in the MAP. Perhaps most prominently, the focus on political party support shifted from strengthening the internal structure and organisation of parties more broadly, towards a much more specific emphasis on the capacities of parties to analyse, develop, and promote policies relevant for its support base, and to engage in a dialogue process. NIMD also commissioned a few country programme evaluations, including for Uganda (Mid-Term Review) (Global Partners Governance 2013), Colombia (Sojo and Rosales 2013), and Tanzania (Whitehead and Killian 2012). NIMD also carried out an in-house or “peer” evaluation of Mozambique (NIMD 2014c) to encourage internal learning, as well as another in-house evidence-gathering exercise focused on gender and women’s political participation in Georgia/South Caucasus (NIMD 2014g). Most of these, including the thematic evaluation and the country programme evaluations, do not cover the period of the 2012-2015 MAP, so evaluations would be useful to assess whether findings and recommendations for the original evaluations were taken into account, and what effect this has had.

NIMD also produced a variety of publications between 2012 and 2015. One, ‘The Power of Interparty Dialogue: Our Stories’ (NIMD 2013g), used an innovative storytelling method to capture the experience of five NIMD country programme Executive Directors (EDs). Over seven months the EDs recorded their own stories, while a team of storytelling facilitators extracted a number of general conclusions and lessons learned. This offered an opportunity for NIMD to present its work in a creative way, and to develop different evidence of the kind of impact and difference it can make. Suggestions for a follow-up storytelling publication on NIMD’s interparty dialogue support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings (FCAS), have not yet been carried out. NIMD also produced a brief publication following the 2012 Africa Regional Conference on political party finances, as well as two other major publications, in collaboration with International IDEA, as part of their Strategic Partnership Agreement. As discussed there, one key challenge that remains is to track how these publications are used and by whom, and whether they affect programmatic decisions. This is something that merits closer monitoring and evaluation across NIMD, and could begin to be explored at the country level.

## 8. Linking and Learning

The Linking and Learning programme incorporates several of the areas discussed above, such as the production of publications, the development of a strategic planning tool based on country programme experience in Georgia and Mozambique, and the use of peer evaluation for internal learning and development. Rather than being a specific programme, “Linking and Learning” has been described by a number of NIMD staff as kind of basket for all knowledge-management related activities which facilitate knowledge sharing between staff in different regions, programmes, and roles.

It is difficult to assess the value of the Linking and Learning programme as a whole to NIMD’s work, since different activities have been implemented to varying degrees in different programmes. However, according to NIMD’s 2012 Annual Report, the consolidation of formerly independent structures into one programme has increased cooperation between former regional programmes, increased exchanges between countries, across regions, and between strategic partners and NIMD staff (NIMD 2012b). In 2013, according to NIMD’s 2014 Annual Report, further efforts were made to connect Linking and Learning activities to country programmes as well as to institutional reforms by developing six Linking and Learning programmes which more clearly present different aspects of the programme’s work (NIMD 2014e).

The value of particular activities with the Linking and Learning programme are reported in internal reviews and by NIMD staff and country partners. Of particular significance is the use of peer-exchange, which was described by one interviewee as an important selling point of NIMD’s work. Country partners and programme managers alike have described peer-exchange mechanisms between staff, and also between political parties in different countries, as being useful for their own learning and ability to develop their work. They have also pointed out its usefulness as a tool for building the capacity of political parties, and encouraging and motivating political parties in different countries to learn from each other’s experiences. For example, NIMD’s 2012 Annual Report noted that when setting up new country programmes, most drew upon the experience of other NIMD country programmes to develop their work plans. So peer-to-peer exchange, Partnership Days and exchange visits are considered valuable tools (NIMD 2012b). More broadly, the use of South-South peer exchange reflects recent literature recommending greater south-south collaboration rather than institutional reforms being designed and prescribed by western development organisations (see Box 1).

Other Linking and Learning activities highlighted by interviewees as particularly useful include:

- peer reviews of country programmes;
- the development of methodologies and instruments, such as the Strategic Planning Tool;
- the introduction (at least in principle) of “travel-free weeks”.

These travel-free weeks are designed to allow staff to discuss institutional themes in a structured manner and to lessen the sense of Programme Managers working in isolation on their own country programmes. For example, the NIMD Management Memo on the findings from the Mozambique peer review (NIMD 2014c) describes the process as a useful way of enhancing institutional learning: “As a form of organisational learning and collegial sharing of experiences this process is appraised as very

successful and desirable to continue in the future". An evaluation of each of the six Linking and Learning programmes to assess their added value could enable NIMD to prioritise resources.

More generally, the Linking and Learning programme reflects NIMD's increased attention to the underlying logic and theory in its work. As one interviewee commented, NIMD is perceived to be an organisation of "specialists in development" rather than in political transformation as such, and so it has been important for NIMD, while improving its programme design, to spend time unpicking assumptions and examining theory about the connections between development and democratisation. For example, according to one interview with NIMD staff, NIMD now acknowledges that it is possible for a country programme to work with parties in different ways, while still working with all parties to avoid being accused of political bias.

The Linking and Learning programme's emphasis on knowledge capture and sharing, and the publication of tools to an external audience also presents the possibility of NIMD acting more as a knowledge organisation which could provide expertise on political engagement to others working on broader development issues. However, interviews with NIMD staff also mentioned the tension that programme staff experience between needing to secure time for their programmes while also devoting time to learning and sharing knowledge. This could be an issue for future evaluation, looking particularly at the impact of Linking and Learning activities on the design and effectiveness of country programme work and how this could justify the use of resources for knowledge management.

## 9. Strategic Partnerships

The building of strategic partnerships is emphasised in the 2012-2015 MAP (as well as the forthcoming one) as a top priority for NIMD, as a means to make the organisation more effective and (financially) sustainable, and also as a way to share risks, complement strengths and capabilities, and build stronger networks to approach donors (NIMD 2011b). It has also been seen as a key vehicle for supporting NIMD to diversify its funding base, as now required by the MFA.

This has led to increasing cooperation with peers such as International IDEA, the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), DEMO Finland, DIPD and to a lesser extent Club de Madrid, which promotes democracy and change in the international community, and the European centre for Electoral Support (ECES), as well as with networks such as the European Partnership for Democracy and the PPPeer network (NIMD is a founding member of both) and development organisations (such as Cordaid and UNDP). NIMD had other, more thematic partnerships prior to the 2012-2015 MAP, with organisations including:

- the initiative for Leadership and Democracy in Africa (iLEDA),
- the Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA);
- Africa Forum, an informal network of former African Heads of State and Government and other African leaders;
- the internationally renowned Dutch media training institute RNTC (on media and politics in Latin America).

However, all these organisations have experienced considerable changes since 2012, and the partnerships fizzled out. In its Annual Plan for 2015, NIMD also outlines an initiative to establish a Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy (GPMD) with Demo Finland, a co-operative organisation for Finnish parliamentary parties, and NIMD partner organisations in-country, to “engage in lobby and advocacy on the relevance of political party support as a means of strengthening democratic development” (NIMD 2015a). A GPMD working group has begun to meet, and GPMD is expected to become active in 2016.

As part of this inception report, the authors were able to look in some detail at the partnership with International IDEA, NIMD’s strategic partner in the current multi-annual plan, but not at others. They could be looked at more deeply as part of an institutional evaluation, or perhaps as a separate, more targeted exercise, especially in terms of how these partnerships work at country level.

### SPA with International IDEA

In 2011 NIMD entered into a strategic partnership agreement (SPA) with International IDEA that was intended to contribute to both organisations through joint programme planning and development, and joint fundraising. The original driver of this partnership was necessity: the MFA had expressed a strong desire to see NIMD and International IDEA collaborate, and NIMD was under strong pressure to diversify its funding base (the MFA had mandated that 25% of NIMD funding had to come from outside the MFA) and a partnership with International IDEA could help with this.

A considerable challenge that dogged this partnership from the start was a lack of clarity about how the PP2 funding would be used or allocated between the two organisations. According to people interviewed in NIMD and in International IDEA, this generated some tensions and frustrations and a lack of trust that took some time to overcome. This was especially true at the regional/country level, where the PP2 funding issue influenced much of the relationship on the ground. A key lesson from this experience has been that clarity and transparency in procedures and agreements is essential from the very start to avoid misunderstandings and mismatched expectations.

However, over time, there seems to be agreement from both organisations that this partnership has been valuable beyond that original need, and that it has been possible to overcome at least some of the tensions surrounding the PP2 funding. The SPA has enabled them to work on certain issues in ways that are more effective and have broader outreach/impact than would have been the case without such partnership. As part of this process, there appears to be growing recognition of the different strengths of each organisation, especially in terms of collaboration on global/thematic issues. International IDEA is seen as strong on the production of knowledge resources, including publications, while NIMD is a more practice-oriented, hands-on organisation with strong networks and presence in a variety of countries. The SPA identifies many different areas of possible collaboration at different levels. Examples of collaboration between NIMD and International IDEA that have yielded positive results are highlighted below.

**Joint fundraising proposal for the Dutch MFA on women’s political participation in Colombia, Tunisia and Kenya:** (WPR – see also the discussion on gender and diversity in Section 4). The proposal was assessed to be of very high quality. Building on work that International IDEA and the UNDP had been doing in Colombia, the project is developing rankings of women’s inclusion in the political system, and this will be expanded to Kenya and Tunisia. There are also plans to organise “Summits of elected women”. Findings from the work are beginning to be shared in different settings and on other platforms, including the UN.

**Inter-party Dialogue Guide and related activities:** The organisations worked together on the guide’s publication and on opening up spaces for debate and engagement on this issue among a broader audience based on their collective networks. In Haiti, for example, relationships between political parties were extremely tense but engagement from NIMD and International IDEA through this guide was able to facilitate a more productive dialogue between the parties.

**Strategic Planning Tool for Political Parties:** This tool was developed in Georgia and Mozambique by NIMD and piloted jointly by NIMD and IDEA Kenya to help political parties plan better. Out of the ten parties that participated originally, nine used it to develop their strategic plans. The fact that NIMD had a trustworthy partner there was instrumental, as the CMD played a crucial role in identifying which parties should participate and in inviting them to take part. This tool has also been used in Georgia (for women’s political participation) and in Colombia (for the youth sectors of political parties) and in Honduras.

**Project on Protecting Politics in Latin America:** (also in collaboration with the Netherlands institute of International Relations, Clingendael). This project consisted of research on the links between political actors and on organised crime in five Latin American countries (Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala and Honduras), and the publication of *Illicit networks and politics in Latin America* (NIMD and International IDEA 2014b). A series of policy briefs are being produced as well. There is an

ambition to influence donor thinking and practice on this issue, which for the most part has not featured in development circles or among Western audiences. A joint proposal is also underway to undertake a similar project in West Africa.

**Joint programme in Ecuador:** This is the most extensive collaboration between NIMD and International IDEA. Collaboration started in 2006 when there was an important moment of political opportunity in Ecuador around the constitutional assembly and the implementation of constitutional mandates. They set up a joint programme, Agora Democrática-IDEA/NIMD, which from the start was based on a full partnership (including a joint team, joint staff, joint planning, shared costs). These efforts were led by individuals who were strongly committed to the partnership from both sides. Financial incentives also helped. Both organisations needed funding, and in the Andean context there is a lot of competition among different players and yet donors are pulling away, so a strategic partnership made a lot of sense from that perspective. As one interviewee put it: “We wouldn’t have been able to do what we did in Ecuador without each other.”

However, as might be expected, continuing budget cuts and pressures to fundraise have taken their toll on the Ecuador programme. As noted by relevant stakeholders, it has not been possible to uphold the original 50/50 funding agreement between NIMD and International IDEA and this has generated some tensions. Meanwhile the need to expand the pool of funders has also meant that “the office has had to partly alter its mandate, to respond to the wishes of different donors” (the challenges of managing multiple donors have also been identified elsewhere in this report).

Despite this challenge, the joint programme in Ecuador has been doing some very interesting work around a variety of issues, particularly on political participation and representation among young people and women. In this respect, as we heard from different people involved with the programme, the programme has developed a range of tools including a survey on young people and political participation in Ecuador (2011) which was the first of its kind; and the [www.activate.ec](http://www.activate.ec) webpage, which contains information about the structure of the state, the rights of the youth in Ecuadorian legislation, mechanisms of citizen participation, statistics on youth, and scholarship and entrepreneurship opportunities. The programme has also been working with the Association of Municipal Women of Ecuador (AMUME) to strengthen the capacities of women involved in politics, and government, as well as civil society at different levels to help them become more effective advocates of women’s issues and women’s rights. According to those involved in the joint programme, the establishment of the AMUME’s Political School for Women has been essential in this respect (see also the discussion on democracy schools earlier in this report). In addition, Agora Democrática, Ecuador's joint programme of International IDEA and NIMD has also been working with researchers from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in Ecuador and with members of the National Assembly to approve a number of laws in the post-constitutional assembly period. While Agora Democrática cannot take credit for this, it is nonetheless telling that public approval of the Assembly has increased significantly over the past 10 years, from 7% in 2005 to 42% in 2011 and 50% in 2012 according to pollsters Perfiles de Opinión. As one observer has put it, it is important to recognise this kind of correlation because proving causation is probably impossible.

**BRIDGE (Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections) modules:** IDEA offered the course to NIMD to ensure that long-term joint training courses could be developed and implemented based on the BRIDGE methodology with a focus on “democracy” rather than “elections”.

Other initiatives that were mentioned include the Africa Regional Programme conferences, which were organised jointly between 2012 and 2014 (NIMD had organised them independently before 2012), and GPS Político in Peru (which allows voters to compare, online, their political views with those of the candidates for the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima). This matching tool was also intended to be implemented in Georgia in 2007-2008 but that attempt failed.

However, as different interviewees noted, progress with the partnership has been uneven. As the examples above suggest, the partnership seems to have focused largely on global/thematic programmes. Some efforts at the country/regional level have worked well too, but that has been less consistent or common. Ecuador and Kenya are good examples of collaboration, but attempts have been less successful elsewhere in the different regions (such as Central America, Africa, MENA). Different factors help to explain this. Some of this has to do, as has been noted above, with tensions and disagreements surrounding PP2 funding arrangements. Others are related to the country context and the kinds of political openings that are available. In South Sudan, for example, the context is very complicated and fragile, and this has made collaboration more challenging. In Ecuador, with the constitutional process now over, the window for continued engagement has become more limited, especially in a context where international funding is drying up. This helps explain why the joint programme there has lost momentum. For others interviewed, there are also large differences between the two organisations which may be harder to overcome at the country level.

People and relationships are crucial as well. The partnership has worked best when, on top of strong programmatic added value, there is good communication and relationships based on trust, and this hinges on personal relationships. The set-up of the joint office in Ecuador is a good example of this. Several people in NIMD and International IDEA observed that personal relationships at different levels had a direct effect on the effectiveness of the collaboration between the two organisations, and sometimes these relationships were better than others. However, there is also a sense that the collaboration between NIMD and IDEA is becoming more institutionalised. The partnership has managed changes of personnel in charge of the partnership at International IDEA well, for example. Executive meetings, which take place twice a year, also help provide regular contact and an (institutionalised) forum to discuss joint plans and other issues.

Active communication is also important in ensuring that the partnership is socialised and understood at different levels within each organisation, and that expectations are set appropriately (a few people commented that initial expectations of what the SPA would achieve were set too high).

It is also essential to understand the kinds of incentives that exist at different levels (country, regional, global) for collaborating— or not. The fact that NIMD and International IDEA have different organisational set-ups (international non-governmental organisation as opposed to inter-governmental organisation) and internal structures may make this more challenging, as accountability channels and incentives may be very different. NIMD, for example, is organised around country programmes, whereas International IDEA is organised around regional programmes and offices that are considerably decentralised. Its Global Programmes are also quite independent from the regional programmes.

Lastly, assessing the impact of the different initiatives and projects that NIMD and International IDEA have undertaken together remains a challenge. The partnership has generated a number of

publications, toolkits, trainings, and events/conferences, but up to now it seems that more systematic efforts to look at what kind of impact or uptake they have had have been rather limited. There are no joint monitoring systems to capture results, for instance. As an interviewee noted, it is possible that this could get too burdensome if it needed to be done for all aspects of the SPA, but it may be worth considering monitoring some activities or outcomes. Several people interviewed mentioned the need for better tracking of what happens to a publication after it is launched and what kind of uptake it has.



## 10. Fundraising

For the first decade of its existence, NIMD was largely (95%) dependent on a single donor, the MFA. This was helpful in different ways. Most importantly, perhaps, was the fact that the MFA provided core funding over several years which gave NIMD a high profile, flexibility and the freedom to be both strategic and innovative. As a report on parliamentary strengthening noted, the organisations that have proven most adept at incorporating and acting on lessons accumulated over the years on how to make international assistance more effective have tended to be those that have this kind of funding (Rocha Menocal and O’Neil 2012).

However, NIMD experience over the past few years has also shown the perils of relying so extensively on one donor. Thus, as part of the 2012-2015 MAP, and also under pressure from the MFA, there was a big push diversify NIMD’s funding base to ensure long-term sustainability, and also to enable the organisation to work in countries outside MFA priorities. And the organisation has made considerable progress in this front. According to one of our interviewees, 95% of NIMD funding came from the MFA at the start and now that figure has come down to (almost) 80%, and the expectation is that it will reduce further in the years to come (see Table 4).

**Table 4: NIMD’s decreasing reliance on MFA funding**

Year	Percentage of total annual income not covered by MFA
2002	5%
2011	11%
2012	13%
2013	15%
2014	20% (projected)

Up until 2011, NIMD programme management costs were all covered by the MFA. Since then other donors since have increasingly contributed and in 2013 15% of such costs were met from non-MFA sources. The 2012-2015 MAP aimed to source 25% of NIMD’s overall income from donors other than the MFA by the end of 2015, so it may be that it will fall somewhat short of that goal (NIMD 2011b). However, according to an observer, progress remains “remarkable”, especially when compared with the previous decade, and at a time when donors have been reducing their budgets. Progress has also been significant given that some of the most considerable fundraising efforts that NIMD has undertaken (with other partners), including the successful proposal for the WPR grant and the Reconstruction project, have not helped diversify sources of funding. The funder remains the MFA (even if the funding does not come from PP2). If anything, these successful projects have made it more difficult for NIMD to diversify, given that the overall amount provided by the MFA has increased.

Different factors have been important in helping to achieve this. As noted in the 2012-2015 MAP, NIMD’s current donors and potential donors identified for its programmes are:

- The EU, through the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED);

- The UK, through the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO);
- Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA);
- Denmark, through the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA);
- Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA);
- The United Nations, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

In fact, as has been noted, one of the strongest rationales for NIMD to engage in strategic partnerships with other like-minded organisations, including, most notably, International IDEA and the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), was to diversify sources of funding and to carry out joint fundraising. Further strategic alliances with organisations such as DIPD and Demo Finland resulted in new joint programmes (in Benin, South Sudan, Tunisia, Egypt and Myanmar) with potential opportunities for funding and additional funding for existing programmes in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Malawi. In the case of the Tanzania programme, this resulted in DIPD taking over an NIMD programme that would no longer receive funding from the MFA (NIMD 2012b; NIMD 2014e). However, as part of this inception report the authors were not able to look in detail at how this diversification of funding is working for NIMD, although this could be done as part of a separate evaluation.

NIMD has also placed greater focus on the role of programme managers in raising funds. As part of this, NIMD created a job for a dedicated fundraiser in 2014 whose primary task is to help both NIMD at an institutional level and NIMD's local partners at the country level to identify opportunities for funding, and to assist with institutional and programmatic fundraising. As a few interviewees pointed out, fundraising efforts have been especially successful at the country level. For 2014, for instance, two thirds of external funding was raised by two country programmes (Burundi and Uganda). Strengthening fundraising capacity at the level of programme managers and in-country programmes seems especially important as donors are increasingly channelling their resources through in-country mechanisms and basket funds. However, as was noted earlier (particularly in the section on sustainability), this needs to be done carefully as the transaction costs could become unnecessarily onerous. In addition, as noted in the 2014 Annual Plan (NIMD 2014d), it will be important to think more strategically how to link donors that invest in one country programme to other programmes; and to exchange information and knowledge more consistently and effectively between NIMD programme managers and NIMD partners. How different country programmes have managed these kinds of funding tensions, and how this links back to programme managers and whether it has been possible to build synergies across country programmes, are also issues that could be worth exploring in a future evaluation, especially at the country level.

However, the need for NIMD to rely on and compete for other sources of funding has also generated some tensions and questions. As several interviewees said, there is a continuing debate on whether NIMD should focus on its niche area of expertise, very much centred on political parties (which donors are reluctant to engage in), or whether it should respond more explicitly to what is attractive to donors. NIMD's new management system is intended to help the organisation manage different sources of funding. According to some of those interviewed for this report, NIMD is also trying to be more strategic in choosing what funding to apply for and to be more proactive in seeking

opportunities and deciding which donors and partners to develop relationships with. However, others observed that NIMD often chooses to pursue the more pragmatic option. This can generate confusing messages internally and also make it difficult to build a consistent and coherent external image; for example: *“We’ll write a proposal for this donor like this, although we know it doesn’t change our priorities or focus.”* The interviewees felt that by diversifying the funding basis and broadening NIMD’s mandate, the organisation runs the risk of becoming a traditional project implementing organisation and losing its distinctive edge (in particular the ability to work in a less risk-averse, and more politically aware manner, and to act as brokers and facilitators of change rather than simply as implementing agents). At the country level, tensions were also articulated between maintaining a longer term, strategic vision and the growing need to compete for shorter term funds.

Having too many donors focusing on individual projects rather than core programmatic objectives can also impose considerable transaction costs. It may force NIMD to focus on different donor priorities, requirements and timelines at the expense of NIMD’s programme strategy. Rolling programming does not fully resolve this because country programmes are still bound to financial planning and donor timelines. Rolling planning gives flexibility to change country programme but not financial resources. There is, therefore, flexibility in terms of changing the programmatic focus, but funds can’t be moved between activities so easily (for example, prior approval for PP2 funds is needed). However, it was also recognised that some donors, also at the country level, do work in a more flexible and long-term manner (for example the Ugandan NGO, the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF), and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Guatemala). This suggests that it will be important for NIMD to find the right kind of balance between pursuing new sources of funding and maintaining a programmatic and strategic focus. Exploring how NIMD does so at the institutional level, and to what effect, will probably be better tested beyond 2015, as the diversification of funds is still too recent. However, these are issues that can begin to be usefully explored through country-level evaluations.

## 11. Where next – the crisis of political representation and implications for working beyond parties

The 2016-2020 MAP articulates very well the strong relevance of the kind of work NIMD does with political parties in terms of the current international environment. For example, both the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, intended to replace the Millennium Development Goals after 2015, and the State- and Peace-Building Goals, developed by the G7 with group of conflict-afflicted states, emphasise the need to foster inclusive political processes, “legitimate politics”, and improved links between state and society. This potentially puts political parties squarely at centre of that agenda as leading intermediaries who can help articulate and translate citizens’ needs and interests.

But there is a real challenge or concern here too. As discussed in Section 1, political parties and parliaments tend to be the institutions that people trust the least, and this is true across countries and regions irrespective of income levels. This is problematic because parties and parliaments are *the* premier organisations of democratic political representation, and they are in crisis in many parts of the world.

It is increasingly acknowledged that people in developed and developing countries are disillusioned with the quality of democratic representation, and are looking for something other than conventional political party representation (as seen in the rise of activism via social media, new forms of protest movements and more). Yet, at the same time, no other institution has yet emerged that can replace the roles of political parties in a functioning democracy. This gets to the core of the challenge of what is needed to improve links between the state and political and civil society, and what this implies for the kind of work that NIMD does, which remains focused mostly on political parties (and the reframed third objective on Political Culture is very much geared towards that).

Is NIMD’s current focus enough? If the challenge is to improve the quality of democratic governance and representation, and to rearticulate the links between state and society in more productive ways, does the organisation need to start thinking more fully about the relevance of the work it does with political parties. Should it consider how ongoing work with political parties can be integrated with a broader agenda on changing political systems and societies so as to engage with this wider challenge more effectively? Does this mean considering working with different parts of civil society or social movements much more proactively and thoroughly? What of other fora and mechanisms outside political parties that seek to bring political representatives and constituents closer together to promote greater accountability and responsiveness around, for example, service delivery? These are all issues that need to be considered in assessing NIMD’s future direction and relevance. As one interviewee noted, this is precisely what the forthcoming MAP sets out to do with its focus on political innovation, and it will be important to monitor how this is put into practice in the 2016-2020 period. Although it is too early to capture this in an institutional evaluation looking at the 2012-2015 window, some of the questions posed here can be usefully explored as part of evaluation efforts that are focused on the country level. This would make it possible to begin to get a sense of how challenges of democratic representation are being addressed by NIMD programmes, and what other avenues of engagement beyond party (and as outlined in the forthcoming MAP) are worth exploring in different contexts and why.

## 12. Reflections on an evaluation for the 2011-2014 period

### Is an institutional evaluation of the period 2011-2014 the best way forward?

This inception study has tried to highlight some of what NIMD has achieved through its three core programmatic objectives (such as functioning multi-party dialogue, legitimacy of political parties; and fruitful interactions between political and civil society); and whether and how its cross-cutting themes have been implemented in country programmes. This study's analysis, limited to a review of NIMD documents and interviews, suggests that, in all these areas, NIMD programmes have achieved some tangible results; this is particularly so in facilitating spaces for multi-party dialogue, bringing political and civil society closer together through democracy schools, and gaining traction with Gender and Diversity as a cross-cutting theme.

Many of the factors driving effectiveness in these areas seem to be rooted in its model of engagement. This is based on facilitating processes of change and spaces of interaction among stakeholders who might not otherwise come together around a table, either to discuss necessary political reforms or to take a course together on democracy and its guiding principles (impartiality, inclusiveness, diversity, local ownership, and long-term commitment). However, tensions are also raised, in terms of, for example: how to keep a broader strategic approach while remaining flexible; or how to push for progressive change while respecting local ownership; how to maintain a coherent identity for the organisation as a whole while facilitating this local ownership; whether the changes brought about are sustainable.

Another key challenge across all three of NIMD objectives and cross-cutting themes (especially in terms of Gender and Diversity) relates to the measuring of results. While NIMD is producing good work in terms of activities/outputs, and it also has well defined high-level objectives, capturing impact at a more mid-range level has proven much more difficult. There is also a need to track progress and impact in a way that looks beyond numbers and actually can focus on the substance of the change achieved, with a particular focus on better capturing pathways of change at the three levels NIMD focuses on: systemic, organisational, and individual.

NIMD has made important progress in terms of the sustainability of its work, including the financial sustainability of country programmes and NIMD head office, the sustainability of NIMD as an organisation in this field, and the sustainability of the outcomes of its work. This is especially evident, for example, in efforts that NIMD has undertaken to diversify its funding base beyond the Dutch MFA, as well as different efforts undertaken at the country level to fund programmes. But as highlighted in this report, some challenges remain, while more fine-grained analysis from the country level would also be desirable.

As we have tried to emphasise in this Inception Study, the 2012-2015 period has been one of considerable change for NIMD as it has sought to address the challenges highlighted above as well as many of the concerns the MFA raised in its 2010 institutional evaluation (MFA 2010).

This has involved some considerable internal restructuring which, among other things, has entailed removing direct links between the NIMD and political parties, slimming down NIMD's management structure, abolishing the knowledge centre, and placing country programmes at the centre. At the same time, NIMD has sought to institute other changes to encourage learning and the sharing of

knowledge and experience across the organisation (and beyond) more effectively and thoroughly, and to turn NIMD into a truly learning organisation. This has included the introduction of tools like the ToC and the BART, the Linking and Learning programme, and innovative ways of capturing evidence such as story-telling. It has also sought to work more closely and strategically with a number of like-minded peer organisations including, most prominently, International IDEA, and to diversify its funding base to decrease its reliance on the MFA.

In principle, an institutional evaluation could look more deeply into the evidence and analysis we provide in this report to give a fuller picture of what NIMD has achieved during that period, how effective and efficient it is as an organisation, and what has enabled those achievements. However, as we have noted at many different points in this Inception Study, it is also essential to keep in mind that many of the changes and innovations that NIMD has undertaken under the current MAP are extremely recent; they have not been fully instituted and implemented across the institute, and for the most part they have also not been fully integrated at the country level.

As a result, an institutional evaluation to be carried out later in 2015 to assess the 2011-2014 period seems premature if part of its objective is to assess how these changes have worked and what kind of difference they are making. To do that in a meaningful manner that can, for example, generate useful lessons and recommendations on how different tools and systems are working, and examine whether the right kinds of results are being tracked and measured across programmes and at an institution-wide level, it would be more fruitfully carried out towards the end of the new MAP (2016-2020) (2015c) to allow enough time for the changes being instituted now to take root. That kind of institutional evaluation should also be carried in a period of eight to ten months, to allow for feedback loops and internal learning as it is being undertaken, and it should aim to include at least four if not more country programmes.

### Country-level programmes are a better focus for evaluation

If an institutional evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency seems too early at this stage, as this report has sought to emphasise, evaluations at the country level are likely to prove highly valuable. There is real appetite, including from external stakeholders and funders, to better understand what NIMD is achieving, especially at the country level, and country-level evaluations will allow for a better understanding of the range of impacts and outcomes achieved in specific countries, and should help to test and refine the internal changes and innovations currently underway.

While producing this study, most of the interviewees emphasised how crucial the country programmes are to NIMD and, as the upcoming MAP (NIMD 2015c) has put it, “transformational change processes can only be realised and sustained through country programmes”. This means that, to look at the impact/effect of NIMD work, it is crucial to look at country programmes themselves. The analysis in this inception report has also consistently noted areas and questions where evaluation efforts focused on the country level could be very useful in generating findings and evidence that an institutional evaluation would not be able to capture at this point, including in terms of the different tools and systems that have been developed to capture results more effectively, issues related to sustainability, questions about programmatic coherence and linkages between different NIMD objectives, questions about how tensions among different NIMD principles are addressed at the country level, opportunities and challenges that a diversification of funding might present, issues

related to ways of working and learning at the country level and how this feeds back to the NIMD HQ level, and the like.

Country-level evaluations thus offer a smaller-scale and more manageable laboratory that is closer to the ground and can therefore generate important lessons to inform the implementation of the 2016-2020 MAP as that unfolds. These country level evaluations will generate new insights into the results achieved, with a focus on the Multi-Annual Plan 2011-2015. In addition, these evaluations will be used to further test these emerging reforms and to assess whether they are fit for purpose. Country level evaluations will also support the development of a clearer understanding of some of the specific ways in which change happens at the country level and the range of possible outcomes which may be generated through NIMD and its partners' work, and in doing so, will assist NIMD to better specify its results chain, enabling a clearer understanding of how specific inputs and activities lead to behavioural, organisational and systemic change.

In particular, NIMD has already commissioned and carried out a few country programme evaluations, with many of them focusing on the period before 2012. It could be useful to do new evaluations of those countries to assess:

- how the programmes have evolved;
- the effect this has had;
- how they interact with and divide tasks with the head office;
- how effective and efficient they have been.

NIMD has also carried out a thematic evaluation on direct party support (Schakel and Svåsand 2014), and country-focused evaluations will be useful in assessing how support to parties has changed on the ground as a result of the recommendations Schakel and Svåsand made. The evaluations could establish what results can be observed, especially in relation to building the capacity of parties for policy engagement and dialogue. The evaluations can also help explore whether support in that area has become more effective as a result, and what lessons emerge.

Country-level evaluations will also allow for a more detailed analysis of how different country offices have been working towards NIMD objectives and themes. It would also:

- show how offices have adapted their focus (for instance, some rethinking on how direct party support should be provided in light of the thematic evaluation on this);
- provide an opportunity to test NIMD's newly developed ToC and other PM&E tools in light of the upcoming MAP;
- show whether and how country programmes envisage incorporating these tools.

Lastly, a focus on the country-level could also inspire fruitful discussions about the kinds of results that can be captured as country programmes move from output to outcome, and that in turn could help inform wider NIMD thinking on this. Country-level evaluations could be very useful in further unpacking the results chain. Further testing the pathways of change through which the work that NIMD does along its three core objectives and cross-cutting themes leads to changes in behaviour, in policy and processes, and ultimately in outcomes. Using an evaluation to reflect on these pathways in

different countries, and to articulate some of the outcomes further along the results chain would help provide a clearer sense of how best to focus dialogue efforts. This in turn could help NIMD showcase its work much more concretely.

Based on the above, the main objectives of country level evaluations will be:

- To identify and assess to what extent select NIMD country programmes have achieved results in the period 2011-2014, with a focus on NIMD's three main areas of intervention; multi-party dialogue, legitimate political parties, and civil-political interaction. This will focus on the MAP period 2012-2015, although this will vary depending on the start / end dates of individual programmes and of past evaluations.
- To determine to what extent NIMD's choice to refine its three main outcomes in its 2012-2015 Multi-Annual Plan, and accompanying institutional reforms, have led to greater effectiveness (for example, in terms of relevance, focus or greater impact).
- To test the newly developed TOC against country experience, to help refine assumptions and intervention logics and capture diverse country contexts. This will include greater assessment of how change happens at the country level, including in ways that may not have been expected, and the range of 'pathways' which NIMD can work through to facilitate change;
- To test the newly developed systems for monitoring and results measurement, with a particular focus on those intermediate processes and outcomes (or 'milestones') that link between activities, outputs and longer term outcomes, based on select country experience;
- To provide recommendations for how to further embed or strengthen NIMD's internal reforms, to position it as an effective leader in its field.

We have developed Terms of Reference to help frame the evaluations. As part of those terms (available separately), we have sought to provide: i) criteria that can help narrow the choice of countries on the basis of what kind of analysis different countries may bring to the table and what kinds of questions each country case study may help to answer/address.; ii) a series of questions based on the analysis and issues we have provided in this report as well as on previous evaluations and their resulting recommendations; and iii) ideas/thoughts on methodological options for the country programme evaluations – although the team carrying out the evaluation will need to develop their own full methodology to ensure flexibility and their ownership of the work. Please refer to those country-level Terms of Reference for further detail.



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