

Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy

NIMD Country Programme Evaluation

Synthesis Report

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Contents

Executive summary	3
Findings on the results of NIMD interventions	3
Findings on contextual effectiveness factors	4
Relevance findings	5
Sustainability findings	6
Organizational effectiveness findings	6
Recommendations	7
Acronyms	10
1. Introduction	11
1.1 Purpose	11
1.2 Political party assistance	12
1.3 NIMD as a niche organization	13
1.4 Methodology	15
2. Country programmes overview	17
2.1 Country contexts	17
2.2 Programmes overview	19
3. NIMD intervention areas and cross-cutting issue results	21
3.1 Functioning multiparty dialogue	21
3.2 Legitimate political parties	25
3.3 Fruitful interaction between political and civil society	29
3.4. Gender and diversity as a cross-cutting theme	32
4. NIMD organizational effectiveness	35
4.1 NIMD niche and value added	35
4.2 Balancing flexible and strategic approaches	36
4.3 Strategic management	37
4.4 Maintaining delivery with changing financial and staffing resources	38
4.5 Influence of central initiatives on country programmes	41
5. Recommendations to position NIMD as a leader in its field	43
5.1 Strategic choices	43
5.2 More effective programming	44
5.3 Strengthening NIMD internal systems	46
5.4 Planning future evaluations	46
References and background documents	48
Appendix A: Methodology	50
Appendix B: Budget and performance information	55



Executive summary

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) was founded by Dutch political parties in 2000 to provide assistance to new democracies. It supports political parties in 20 countries. It has commissioned an evaluation of three of its country programmes, those in Georgia, Guatemala and Mali, with three objectives.

The first objective was to assess the extent to which NIMD achieved results in the period 2011–2014, with a focus on its three main areas of intervention and one cross-cutting theme:

- multiparty dialogue;
- legitimate political parties;
- interaction between political society and civil society; and
- integration of gender and diversity across its work.

The second objective was to assess the extent to which the *NIMD Multi-Annual Plan, 2012-2015* (MAP); ‘2014 Theory of Change’ and accompanying institutional reforms led to increased effectiveness.

The third objective was to make recommendations on how to further embed or strengthen NIMD’s internal reforms in order to position it as an effective leader in its field.

Findings on the results of NIMD interventions

NIMD can achieve positive, small but strategic results with its multiparty platforms.

Multiparty dialogue is NIMD’s original niche, meant to facilitate greater trust among parties and a process of consensus-building. In all three countries NIMD facilitated peaceful dialogue between parties that are rivals and may not have other forums in which they can engage constructively. It made a significant contribution in terms of recognition of the intrinsic value of political dialogue. Overall, the most valuable and irreplaceable contribution of the NIMD programme was the response to the 2012 coup d’état in Mali. The platform was used as the initial forum to discuss the democratic transition immediately following the coup, held only ten days after, which underlines the great benefit of a pre-existing platform. Other concrete results from dialogues included a number of specific laws or agreements influenced by the multiparty platforms.

NIMD’s direct party assistance results are hard to identify. NIMD is one of a small number of international organizations that work specifically with political parties and its objective was to contribute to their legitimacy, with a focus on improving their policy-seeking capacity. Party assistance was most systematic and sophisticated in Georgia and much more limited in Mali or Guatemala. However, while assistance was appreciated, there was limited evidence it actually helped parties perform better, develop new policies they would use, or improve links with citizens. Multiparty assistance to the elections in Mali seems to have been more effective and contributed to more peaceful elections in 2013. NIMD also delivered parliamentary assistance under this objective. Focusing on political system-level reforms provided more significant results towards democratization, such as support for Mali’s reform of the role of the opposition under its multiparty platform. However, in



Guatemala, where NIMD has the most comprehensive and long standing intervention, it did not limit its assistance to political party activities in Congress but instead focused mostly on the institutional capacity of Congress, where it achieved very limited results. Greater attention to citizens' engagement with Congress led to more significant results, such as collaboration with the only member of Congress from an indigenous people's political party (Winaq) while he was President of the Transparency Commission. With NIMD facilitation, he established municipal Transparency Commissions that led to some mayors being held to account, such as the Antigua Mayor who is now in jail.

Democracy schools and additional civil-political society processes are an excellent NIMD innovation, which have led to concrete results. This new objective was to promote more fruitful interaction between political society and civil society in order to build trust and increase the legitimacy of political parties in the eyes of the population. NIMD Georgia had the most sophisticated approach, with multi-month long courses focused on civil society activists in four cities achieving visible results. Around five hundred alumni of democracy schools continued to play an important role in the civic life of their respective cities. Democracy school alumni described their experience as having a highly significant, almost life-changing, impact. The Guatemala school organized 92 events for 1900 political party, civil society, Congress and other categories of stakeholders between 2012 and 2014. Participants in the Guatemala programmes were all very positive but the evaluation could not identify a wider effect. Overall, it is difficult to evaluate how these schools influenced the objective of more fruitful civil-political society relations in the absence of a system for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that tracks behaviour change and not just events.

NIMD's willingness and ability to focus on gender and diversity was a value added. Even though it was a cross-cutting issue identified in NIMD's MAP, consistent with its principle of inclusivity and the objective of more legitimate political parties, this was not a systematic management priority. The results are indicative of what NIMD can achieve, with most progress on gender. The approach to gender was mostly around targeted activities on women's empowerment. Important results included the Guatemala Women's Commission, facilitated by the multiparty platform, which led to alliances across parties and collaboration with women's organizations. Georgia had incorporated gender into much of its programming with political parties, establishing women's wings and internal party positions on quotas for women. In Mali, a country with extremely low rates of female political participation, NIMD required the participation of women in party representation activities. Women participants were well represented in the Democracy Schools, and content covered relevant issues. By comparison, NIMD found it more difficult to achieve results on ethnicity. Its main achievement was its partnership with Winaq in Guatemala, albeit on a very small scale, and assistance to some indigenous leaders in the democracy school. Results on youth were less visible. Activities included participation in the democracy schools, support for the creation and development of youth associations engaged in political parties in Mali and the South Caucasus regional youth dialogue programme.

Findings on contextual effectiveness factors

A number of contextual factors explain the extent to which NIMD was able to achieve these results. All three countries have experienced relatively recent democratization and none had a de facto dominant party regime, which made multiparty and explicit democratization work more feasible. Relatively small populations and external incentives for change also facilitated NIMD interventions. Georgia provided the most enabling context,



with higher levels of capacity, a new opening for a genuinely multiparty environment following the 2012 election and the incentive of European integration for some. By contrast, Mali provided the most precarious context, with the most limited capacity and the most political instability (the 2012 coup and conflict in the north of the country). NIMD's contributions could therefore have the most effect. It is questionable, for instance, whether an inclusive dialogue could have been organized at such short notice after the 2012 coup if NIMD's platform had not existed. NIMD was less able to achieve results in Guatemala's deteriorating political context, where parties have a very short political life and Congress became more challenging. It had not been able to position itself in response to the April 2015 crisis, when a massive corruption scandal sparked regular popular demonstrations throughout the country and led to the resignation and detention of the president and the vice-president.

Political contextual factors, such as political instability, made multiparty platform interventions more difficult but do not seem to be determinant factors; they seem to have influenced party and parliamentary assistance more. Overall, the salience and fit with the political context, and relevance to powerful political players, rather than a generic thematic focus or a specific structure, were the main drivers of the effectiveness of the platforms. This means that NIMD should not delay in changing its approach when these factors are no longer present and proactively consider when platforms should come to an end, as in Guatemala. Political contextual factors influenced political party and parliamentary assistance effectiveness to a significant degree, as these interventions are much more directly dependent on political change and the incentives of political players. Again, NIMD's ability to adapt to the true nature of politics and refresh its assumptions proved key to its effectiveness.

Different contextual factors influenced the results of the democracy schools and which diversity issues could be most easily addressed. Alliances with leaders of civil society organizations or social movements could lead to more progress on political participation, especially where they were more established or particularly committed. NIMD was able to achieve less progress on deep and entrenched social norms, such as gender discrimination in Mali, racism in Guatemala and discrimination against minority ethnicities in Georgia. NIMD offices are part of a country's social context and this affects their ability to address some societal issues. For example, NIMD's partner in Mali was somewhat hampered in its ability to address representativeness given that it is an organization of political parties.

Relevance findings

The three country contexts shared a number of characteristics that made NIMD interventions in support of multiparty democracy relevant. The move towards a multiparty system was still being consolidated. Political parties tended not to be fully developed vehicles for the representation of interests, and to have only limited programmatic agendas. There was significant exclusion from political life across all three countries, although patterns differed.

Salience and fit to the political context, and relevance to powerful political players influenced the relevance of the platforms. Recipients of the political party and parliamentary assistance were positive about it and wanted more, but that does not mean it was always relevant in the wider political context.



There are questions about the appropriateness of the focus of parliamentary assistance in relation to NIMD's mandate and strategy. Work on strategic legislation and other reforms that can influence the political party system as a whole, rather than institutional strengthening per se, would seem to fit better with the MAP's party system reform objective, and in time could deliver more sustainable gains in terms of NIMD's overall deeper democracy vision, than direct party assistance.

Political-civil society, and gender and diversity interventions were relevant in all three countries, given the distrust that politicians have towards organized civil society and significant exclusion issues. NIMD's willingness and ability to focus on gender and diversity were relevant and a value added with significant potential. However, approaches and degrees of investment were not consistent. In general NIMD was particularly appreciated by less powerful stakeholders, including under-represented social groups which could collaborate with NIMD to access powerful actors.

Sustainability findings

None of the country programmes were considered financially sustainable without continued donor funding. Financial sustainability was weak across all interventions. None of the platforms were financially sustainable without NIMD assistance. The schools cannot be designed with a view to achieving financial sustainability in the short term so NIMD needs to plan for the longer term.

Programme sustainability was more varied. The platform interventions influenced local cultures of political dialogue. Programmatic sustainability was weak with regard to political party assistance programmes, which were not aligned to political incentives and worked best when partners were committed to change and had access to fewer resources. Democracy Schools programme sustainability depends on adopting an approach that goes beyond training towards behaviour change, and local institutional partnerships could take over the courses in the medium to longer term. NIMD has not yet adopted a strategic approach to gender and diversity that could be assessed for its sustainability. A strategy is needed to address the main barriers to political participation, drawing on evidence.

Organizational effectiveness findings

The second objective of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the MAP, 2014 Theory of Change and accompanying institutional reforms led to increased effectiveness.

The three country evaluations confirmed that NIMD has a clear niche and a good reputation among its main stakeholders. NIMD was particularly appreciated because of its neutrality, which gave it convening power. Its long-term presence, local staff, local networks and partnerships were particular strengths in all countries, However, the NIMD principles of impartiality and inclusiveness were at times under strain. In each country, some groups had more influence or others had been excluded. In general, NIMD was particularly appreciated by less powerful stakeholders, including under-represented social groups who could collaborate with NIMD to access powerful actors.

Even though NIMD programmes offer the same 'menu', they were adapted to the local contexts and reflected team expertise. NIMD's context-specific and flexible approach was most visible in response to political crises. Some of these successes were the consequence of risk-taking: investing in processes without knowing in advance what the results would be,



but identifying that they could play a role in a democratization context. Some country teams developed political analysis tools to inform their approaches.

Nonetheless, responsiveness was not a consistent strength and, at times, NIMD could be slow to change when the assumptions behind its intervention logic no longer held. For example, in Guatemala, it maintained support for its permanent political party forum many years after it had stopped being effective and was unable to attract the right political participants. It was less well adapted to the nature of political party incentives. Overall, NIMD's ability to adapt interventions as political contexts changed was more relevant to its effectiveness than the diversity of contexts.

A strategic approach was not always visible across country programmes. Country programmes seemed in general to be more driven by programmes and activities around NIMD's three intervention areas than by a deep understanding of the overall theory of change. Country offices were constrained by the management tools at their disposal. M&E systems were similarly insufficient to inform strategic management. Learning has also been inconsistent across country programmes, even though NIMD is clearly a thinking and self-reflecting organization. The limited progress on strategic, evidence-based management seems to be a NIMD-wide challenge beyond the control of the country programmes.

Country teams have had to adjust to significant changes in their resource base. The need to find new donors has brought new pressures. The Mali model of local independent partners may be coming under strain. Fundraising beyond Dutch government support has also created opportunities. For example, a new Swedish grant enabled a refreshed approach to assistance to Congress in Guatemala, focused on engagement with citizens, which was appropriate in the increasingly difficult political context.

Given the limited management data, it has been difficult to assess the efficiency of the country programmes. Very rough illustrative proxies developed to attempt to determine efficiency seemed to show great diversity. The Guatemala and Georgia experiences also demonstrate the importance of stable leadership within NIMD, and adequate planning for transitions in order to maintain performance.

The programmatic influence of the *Multi-Annual Plan, 2012–2015* seems to be one of evolution of country programmes rather than radical change. As had been anticipated in the inception report, most of the central HQ initiatives were too new to be evaluated. Guatemala is the programme which was probably the most negatively affected by NIMD's radical institutional changes after 2011 as it led to a reduced budget and new regional responsibilities, and initiated a period of country-level management instability. These findings highlight a wider tension within NIMD about the relationship between HQ and country programmes.

Recommendations

The third objective was to provide recommendations on how to further embed or strengthen NIMD's internal reforms to position it as an effective leader in its field.

The evaluation raises three strategic questions for NIMD management. As some ambiguities remain in the 2016–2020 MAP, NIMD should:



- Continue to evaluate whether it wishes to remain a political party niche organization or to broaden its focus towards democratization more generally.
- Consider whether it wants to retain its Dutch identity or internationalize fully.
- Decide whether it wants to continue to localize its programmes into a looser network, or whether it wants to strengthen itself as a unified organization.

To achieve even more visible and sustained programme results, NIMD should:

- Ensure that interventions are more systematically based on a detailed analysis of the political, social and economic contexts.
- Continue to proactively balance the key principles of impartiality and inclusiveness.
- Be willing to think outside traditional models to achieve NIMD's overall objective.

To build on multiparty achievements to date, NIMD should:

- Design and manage a platform with a view to ensuring its continued salience and fit in the political context, and relevance for powerful political players, rather than a generic thematic focus or replicating a specific structure.
- Develop consistent, contextually sensitive criteria for participation, including for non-parliamentary parties, civil society and other actors which may not be part of the political party system but are important for pluralistic dialogue.
- Not delay in changing its approach and proactively considering when platforms should come to an end.

Given the limited visible results from party assistance, NIMD should re-examine its theory of change to:

- Be much clearer on the overall objective: is it about parties' own capacity, the party system as a whole or the role parties play in linking citizens with the state?
- Develop consistent, contextually sensitive criteria on political party participation.
- Make a more significant difference, over the longer term, in addressing the political party system rather than working directly with individual parties.

In addition,

- To address the severe crisis of political representation, NIMD needs to work with a broader range of actors than only political parties, or even parliaments. This could become a more systematic guiding objective, emphasizing the role of parties in representing interests. This could mean an explicit NIMD goal of greater inclusivity and participation combined with multiparty democracy.
- NIMD should decide the place of parliamentary assistance in its strategy, policy and programmes.

To enable significant contributions by Democracy Schools and additional civil-political society processes, NIMD should:

- Maintain a context-sensitive approach and not introduce a standard approach to the Democracy Schools or this objective across countries.
- Make sure engagement is not limited to 'professional NGOs' but really reaches out to grassroots organizations and citizens.



- Adopt a strategic approach that tracks behaviour change through appropriate M&E, thinks about sustainability from the start and links activities to the objective of improved civil-political society relations and a democratic culture.

To achieve more measurable and significant results under the new 2016-2020 MAP gender and diversity a cross-cutting theme, NIMD should:

- Adopt a more systematic and resourced approach that includes dedicated staff, support from the centre, guidance, tools, M&E and exchange of experiences.
- Start from an analysis of the country context and barriers to political participation, which may identify new inclusion priorities such as religion, class and geography, rather than gender, youth and ethnicity.
- This political and social analysis should also include a reflection on the country team's capacity to address these deeply socially embedded issues.

NIMD HQ should strengthen its internal systems and support to country teams. It should:

- Complete existing internal reforms in order to adopt more effective strategic management system, and roll them out to country programmes.
- Appoint a 'change manager' or allocate in a different way sufficient staff resources dedicated to implementing perhaps fewer priority reforms.
- Provide more support to country programmes that need it, in particular with systems improvements, and ensure sufficient country programme capacity before further decentralization of responsibilities.
- Assist country teams in focusing on the theory of change and ensuring that they use it directly to inform their work, to help translate the 2016–2020 MAP into strategic, context-specific programmes.
- Ensure greater HQ capacity to identify and share learning that supports innovative and effective country delivery.

The evaluation team also made detailed recommendations to NIMD so it can undertake a more rigorous evaluation in the future, including improved preparation and management of an evaluation process. NIMD should plan now how to evaluate the impact of the 2016–2020 MAP, using improved M&E systems.



Acronyms

BART	Baseline and Review Toolkit
CMDID	Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Interpartis et la Démocratie (Malian Centre for Inter-party Dialogue and Democracy)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GD	Georgia Dream
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (The Netherlands)
MAP	Multiannual Plan
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNM	United National Movement



1. Introduction

This introduction presents the evaluation's three main objectives, a brief overview of lessons learned from political party assistance, NIMD's niche and the intervention logics it used in 2011–2015.

1.1 Purpose

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) was founded by Dutch political parties in 2000 to provide assistance to new democracies. It supports political parties in 20 countries, facilitating inter-party dialogue, building their capacities and promoting political society-civil society interactions.

NIMD commissioned an institutional evaluation of the period 2011–2014, with a focus on three country programmes (Georgia, Guatemala and Mali). This report is a synthesis of the country evaluations (Mitchell and Ninua, 2015; Piron and Slowing, 2015; Murphy and Keita, 2015, respectively), which are available separately. It draws on the findings of the evaluation inception report (Rocha Menocal et al., 2015a).

The first objective of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which NIMD achieved results in the period 2011–2014, with a focus on its three main areas of intervention and one cross-cutting theme:

- multiparty dialogue;
- legitimate political parties;
- interaction between political society and civil society; and
- integration of gender and diversity across its work.

The second objective was to assess the extent to which the NIMD *Multi-Annual Plan, 2012–2015* (MAP), 2014 Theory of Change and accompanying institutional reforms led to increased effectiveness. The third objective was to make recommendations on how to further embed or strengthen NIMD's internal reforms in order to position it as an effective leader in its field.

This synthesis report presents the three country programmes and contextual factors (section 2); synthesizes the findings on the three areas of intervention and one cross-cutting theme, objective 1 (section 3); synthesizes the findings on the drivers of NIMD's organizational effectiveness, including the influence of the 2012–2015 MAP, objective 2 (section 4); and makes recommendations to NIMD to position it as an effective leader in the field, objective 3 (section 5). Appendix A provides more details on the methodology. Appendix B provides budget and other performance information.

The author would like to thank the evaluation team and peer reviewer for their dedicated contribution to the synthesis report in addition to their country evaluation reports, including through brainstorming, peer reviewing and responding to NIMD feedback, all in a very short timeframe. She would also like to thank her NIMD counterparts, including Pepijn Gerrits and Nic van der Jagt, all the NIMD country teams and the internal and external steering committees for their support with the evaluation process and their constructive engagement.



1.2 Political party assistance

Political parties are the prime institutions that link citizens to the state and have an essential role to play in a democracy. However, they are deeply mistrusted and are consistently ranked as institutions that people trust the least (Menocal et al., 2015a). Too often they are democracy's 'weakest link'. They tend to be highly personalized, centralized, corrupt, not rooted in society, with weak or top-down organizational management, opaque funding and driven by 'relentless electoralism' (Carothers, 2006).

Support to political parties has been increasing since the 1980s but it remains the smallest component of democracy assistance. It is a difficult area in which for external organizations and donors to engage, because it goes to the heart of how state power is exercised both formally, through elections and in parliaments, and more importantly informally, through networks and various forms exclusion.

A number of lessons have been learned over the past two decades (see box 1). Traditional approaches addressed weaknesses in political parties through capacity building, such as training. However, capacity constraints are not the most important determinants of parties' effectiveness. Most importantly, it is necessary to base assistance on a deep understanding of the wider social, economic and political system in order to understand the role parties really play and whose interests they serve.

Box 1: Lessons from political party support

- 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 idealized 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 organizations 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).

Source: Taken from Rocha Menocal et al. (2015a)



1.3 NIMD as a niche organization

NIMD is one of very few international organizations that work specifically on political party assistance. It has developed a distinctive approach, as set out in its *Multi Annual Plan, 2012–2015* (NIMD, 2011b), not only working on politics and with political institutions, but also trying to operate in a politically informed way.

NIMD's model reflects many of the lessons of more effective engagement highlighted in box 1, and illustrated by its current guiding principles (NIMD, 2015: 12):

- *Impartiality*: NIMD's approach is non-partisan. The organization is 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 opposition. The intention is to enable them to take part in a dialogue on issues of national interest on an equal footing.
- *Diversity*: NIMD encourages the participation and representation of groups that have traditionally been marginalized, especially women and young people, so that they can also take part in the policymaking process.
- *Local ownership*: NIMD programmes are intended to be locally defined and owned in order to reflect domestic demands.
- *Long-term commitment*: Recognizing 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.

In 2012–2015, NIMD sought to strengthen the quality of political parties and their effect on democratic governance through three main intervention areas (outputs):

- Multiparty platforms for dialogue
- Enhancing the policy-seeking capacities of political parties
- Engagement and interaction between political society and civil society.

Table 1 sets out NIMD's intervention logic, as set out in its 2012–2015 MAP.

In 2014, this approach was refined in a new theory of change, which distinguishes between three levels (see figure 1):

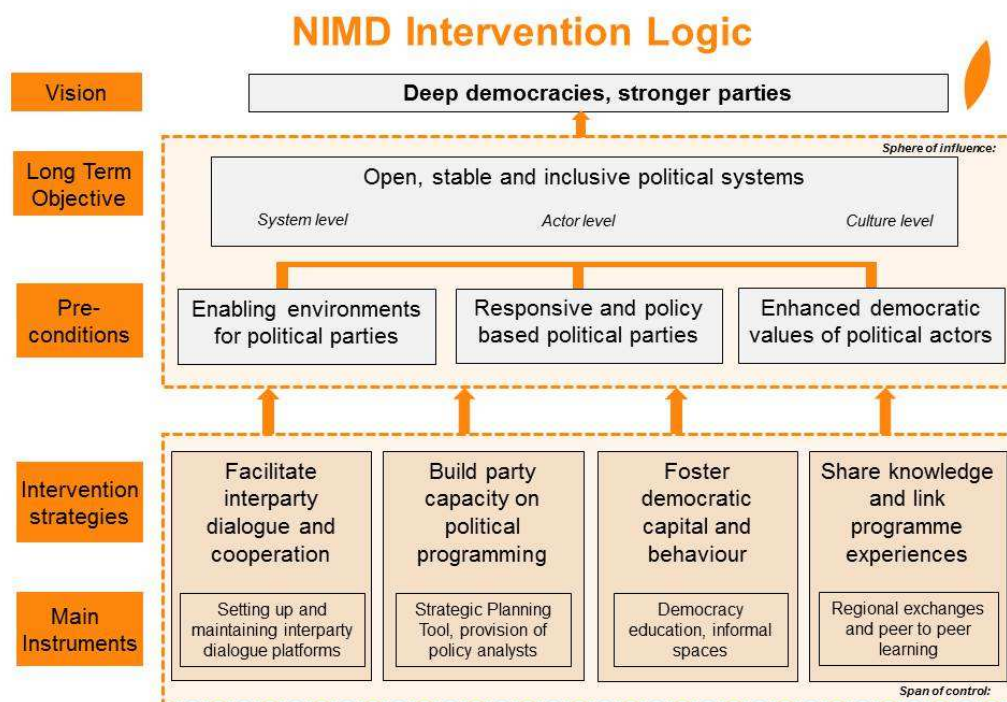
- **political and party systems** (to foster inclusive and representative political systems, especially through dialogue);
- **political parties/actors** (especially in terms of strengthening the programmatic and organizational capacity of political parties, as well as their ability to engage in dialogue); and
- **links between political and civil society and political culture.**



Table 1: NIMD Intervention Logic, 2012–2015

	Objectives	Indicators	Source of Verification	Conditions (risks)
Vision	Democratic societies in which the rule of law is observed and the public good fostered	Programme countries with improved overall scores on the Bertelsmann Index (BTI), Freedom House Index and EIU Democracy Index		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security and stability; free and fair elections • Separation of powers
Impact	Legitimate political parties that operate in a functional multiparty political system which initiates, manages and implements policy-based reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # reform proposals implemented • # of countries with improved scores on the EIU Democracy indicators for ‘Functioning of Government’ and ‘Electoral Process and Pluralism’ • # of countries with improved score on BTI indicator for ‘Governance Capability’ 	Indexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will • Rule of law • Functioning democratic institutions • Popular support for democracy • Trust in democratic institutions • Financial transparency
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functioning inter-party dialogue 2. Legitimate political parties 3. Improved interaction between political and civil society 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 # reform proposals adopted 1.2 # countries with appropriate level of party representatives in dialogue platforms 2.1 # of countries with improved score on Afro/Latino barometer for ‘average trust in democratic institutions’ 2.2 # of countries with improved score on Afro/Latino barometer for ‘trust in political parties’ 3.1 # of countries with improved score on Afro/Latino barometer for ‘trust in the government/judiciary/’ 3.2 # of countries with improved score on the EIU Democracy indicators for ‘political culture’ 3.3 # of countries with improved scores on the EIU Democracy indicators for ‘political participation’ 3.4 # of countries with improved score on Afro/Latino barometer for ‘popular support for democracy’ 3.5 # of countries with improved score on Afro/Latino barometer for ‘engagement in politics’ 	National Gazettes’ Afro and Latino barometers; Subscores from EIU and BTI Indexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate legislation • Accountable officials • Free media • Commitment of political parties to dialogue

Figure 1: NIMD's Intervention Logic (NIMD, 2014a)



1.4 Methodology

This institutional evaluation was undertaken in two phases. The inception phase produced an inception report (Rocha Menocal et al., 2015a) and full terms of reference for country programme evaluations (Rocha Menocal et al., 2015b). The main phase was the independent evaluation of three country programmes for which NIMD contracted a different team.

The evaluation TORs set out the criteria that NIMD used to select the country programmes, in agreement with the priorities of the external steering committee. The main criteria were:

- At least three countries for breadth of analysis, and to give a broad representation of the range of NIMD's work and of the countries in which it works.
- The existence of previous country level evaluations to provide a 'baseline' for this evaluation, and to allow for testing of reforms which may have taken place in response to previous evaluation recommendations (except Georgia).
- Significant experience of NIMD operations (at least four years in-country).

The three country evaluations were undertaken under an extremely tight timeline (July–August 2015) in order to meet a Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) deadline. As a result, as agreed with NIMD, the evaluation terms of reference developed during the inception phase had to be reduced in scope (for more details see Appendix A).

The country programme evaluations adopted a theory-based approach, which is considered more appropriate for political party assistance (Uggla, 2007). They tested the underlying programme logic and the extent to which it was consistent with programme activities and the wider evidence, and contributed to results. The main challenge encountered by the



evaluation team concerned the difficulty of accessing some NIMD management, monitoring and evaluation data. The evaluation teams therefore relied significantly on qualitative, interview-based data to triangulate findings.



2. Country programmes overview

This section provides a brief overview of the three country contexts in which NIMD operated and the interventions it supported.

2.1 Country contexts

The three countries were selected in order to offer a breadth of engagement. They are illustrative of the kinds of programmes NIMD supports, but they do not cover the wider range of contexts in which NIMD operates.

The three countries selected for this evaluation presented very different contexts for engagement. Georgia provided the most enabling context, and Mali the most precarious and with the most limited capacity.

- Georgia had the highest level of human development of the three countries (ranked 79th out of 187 countries), with less than 20 per cent of the population living in poverty (UNDP, 2014). In the October 2012 parliamentary election, the ruling United National Movement (UNM) was defeated by a new, broad opposition coalition known as the Georgian Dream (GD). That election ushered in a period of greater freedom and pluralism, and created an opening for a genuinely multiparty Georgia. It brought an end to almost a decade of one-party rule, which was characterized by rapid reforms and significant reductions in corruption but also shrinking democratic space.
- Mali had the lowest level of human development (176th out of 187 countries) and two-thirds of the population living in poverty. During the evaluation period a rebellion in the north of the country involving ethnic minorities fostered instability. In March 2012 a military coup forced the elected president to resign. This resulted in a further substantial degradation of the political and security situation, with much of the north falling into the hands of a shifting combination of separatist Azawad forces and jihadists. A transition to democracy was negotiated following the coup, and parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 2013.
- Guatemala also has a relatively low level of human development (125th out of 187 countries) as well as high levels of inequality with half of its population living in poverty. The country has been unable to implement fully the 1996 Peace Accords and democratization is stalling in a highly volatile and fluid political system. Elections took place at the start of the evaluation period (2001) and as the evaluation was being concluded (September 2015). In April 2015, the country entered a period of political instability, with prosecutions against high-level officials leading to the resignation of the vice president and the president, and regular popular protests against corruption.

The three country contexts shared a number of characteristics that made NIMD interventions in support of multiparty democracy relevant:

- All have experienced relatively recent democratization and the move towards a multiparty system is still being consolidated.



- Political parties tended not to be fully developed vehicles for the representation of interests, having only limited programmatic agendas. The nature of patronage varied hugely.
- There was significant exclusion from political life across all countries, although patterns differed. Women’s political participation was low across the board.
- Youth exclusion was a more significant issue in the young populations of Mali and Guatemala, where more than half the population is under 25 years of age, rather than the Georgia where, in common with other post-Soviet states, a quarter to one-third of the population are over 55 years old.
- Patterns of exclusion based on ethnicity also varied. Indigenous people in Guatemala represented 40 per cent of the population, were twice as likely to live in poverty and victims of patronage politics. Roughly 85 per cent of Georgia’s population is ethnic Georgian. Armenians and Azeris constitute the two largest minorities.

Table 2: Summary of NIMD interventions in the three country programmes

	Mali	Georgia	Guatemala
Multiparty platform	CMDID is the multiparty platform	Two thematic task forces on gender and ethnic minorities as part of the Political Party Assistance Programme	Permanent Forum of Political Parties with 10–12 thematic commissions
Party and parliamentary assistance	Planned political party assistance activities suspended after 2012	Political Party Assistance Programme	Support to Congress programme Direct support to parties integrated in other programmes
Political-civil society interactions	Regional network of committees of women political activists Association of young political activists	Democracy Schools in four cities outside the capital	Democracy Schools in the capital and nine departments
Other (not evaluated)		Regional youth dialogue	Regional environmental Security Creation of Economic and Social Council

All three country contexts provided enabling factors for NIMD interventions:

- None of the programmes operated in a de facto dominant party regime, which made multiparty and explicit democratization work more feasible.
- All three countries had relatively small populations, making access to political elites relatively easier than in larger countries (a population of 4 million in Georgia and around 16 million each in Mali and Guatemala).
- All three countries had external incentives for political reform during the evaluation period. Guatemala tended to react to the international community’s direct intervention (the US-backed United Nations (UN) anti-corruption commission behind the impeachments and resignations of senior political officials). There was an external military intervention in Mali and a UN peacekeeping mission still in the country at the time of the evaluation. European integration was a motivating factor for some parties in Georgia, while the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as ongoing Russian threats to expand its influence in Georgia, remained central to the political life of the country.



2.2 Programmes overview

NIMD country programmes operated through two different models: two country offices and one local partner organization. NIMD established country offices in Guatemala and Georgia in 2002 and 2009, respectively (although activities in Georgia started in 2004 managed from HQ). They both acquired regional responsibilities: the Guatemala office helped establish and supported programmes in El Salvador and Honduras while the Georgia office facilitated regional dialogues.

In Mali, NIMD activities started in 2003 and the operated through a Mali-registered foundation, the Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Inter Partis et la Démocratie (CMDID), founded in 2008. NIMD's role as the primary partner and supporter of CMDID is entrenched in CMDID's by-laws.

The three country portfolios responded to the three MAP intervention areas through distinctive programmes. Guatemala adopted the most comprehensive approach, while Mali was the more focused (see Table 2).

Table 3: Comparative staff and budget information (€)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Georgia					
Total staff on payroll	2	5	5	6	8
Total budget (including other donors)	116,668	208,269	424,648	498,625	539,435
Share MFA of total budget	100%	100%	67%	50%	57%
Guatemala					
Total staff on payroll	N/A	8	9	9	10 staff + 6 consultants
Total budget including other donors	603,825	621,476	564,385	508,407	526,795
Share MFA of total budget	87%	100%	90%	100%	95.6%
Mali					
Total staff on payroll (paid by NIMD grant)	6	6	6	7	7
Total NIMD budget	539,422	469,739	349,656	387,743	336,107
Total NIMD and other donors	604,527	632,605	406,757	555,343	405,603
Share MFA of total budget	88%	65%	84%	57%	80%

Sources: Total budget from NIMD Annual Reports; other data provided by NIMD

The three country programmes had roughly similar budgets by the end of the period (€400,000 for Mali and over €500,000 for Guatemala and Georgia) and a roughly similar number of staff on the payroll—from seven in Mali to ten in Guatemala, all local (see Table 3 and Annex A for more budget information). The Georgia programme grew the most during the period, resulting in a much higher per capita level of assistance than in Mali or



Guatemala, where the Dutch MFA contributions and total budgets reduced. NIMD Guatemala remained the most dependent on MFA funding.



3. NIMD intervention areas and cross-cutting issue results

This section synthesizes the findings under the evaluation's first objective: the extent to which NIMD country programmes in Georgia, Guatemala and Mali have achieved results in the period 2011–2014, with a focus on NIMD's three main areas of intervention, as well as a cross-cutting issue:

- multiparty dialogue (section 3.1)
- legitimate political parties (section 3.2)
- civil-political interaction (section 3.3)
- integration of gender/diversity (section 3.4)

It integrates the evidence provided by the three country reports across all the evaluation criteria (relevance, impacts, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and the evaluation questions set out in the evaluation matrix. It also draws on the main inception report desk-based evidence of each theme, and aims to respond to the questions it raised.

Given that the evaluation only covers three out of NIMD's 20 country programmes, not all the synthesis findings can be extrapolated to an institutional level.

3.1 Functioning multiparty dialogue

This section reviews the intervention logic, describes the main programme activities, identifies results and provides the main findings, including on internal and contextual effectiveness.

3.1.1 Intervention logic

Multiparty dialogue is NIMD's original niche and its first area of intervention set out in its 2012–2015 MAP. Dialogue between all political parties is meant to facilitate greater trust among parties, and a process of consensus-building (NIMD, 2011b). This is a space to discuss issues of shared concern, identify and develop shared 'system' reforms, and 'normalize' interaction between political parties, which is often otherwise characterized by mistrust and polarization (Rocha Menocal, 2015a: 14).

3.1.2 Multiparty dialogue activities and results

NIMD supported multiparty dialogue platforms in all three countries. In each country, the platform operated in distinctive ways. They all facilitated peaceful dialogue between parties that were rivals and may not have had other forums in which they could engage constructively.

- In Mali, NIMD established CMDID in 2008 as a Mali-registered foundation, which was the multiparty platform, governed by Mali's political parties. CMDID is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of representatives selected by Malian political parties. On a day-to-day basis, the work of the Board is delegated to a three-person Bureau in which government, opposition and smaller parties are represented.
- In Guatemala, the NIMD office was the sole funder and facilitator of the Permanent Forum of Political Parties it had helped to create in 2002. This platform was thus



more akin to a long-standing NIMD project, located in the same building and facilitated by NIMD staff.

- In Georgia, NIMD was supporting two thematic dialogues as a component of its political party assistance programme, on gender and on minorities. These met in different places as needed, with or without NIMD facilitation. (NIMD also supported a regional dialogue involving Azerbaijan and Armenian youth politicians, which was not evaluated.)

NIMD can achieve positive, small-scale but strategic results with its multiparty platforms.

Results from multiparty dialogue can be tracked in two ways: as an instrumental tool which leads to joint decisions that eventually influence other processes (for example, enable a solution to a crisis or be picked up by parties or parliament), or in terms of a qualitative improvement in peaceful dialogue, which is considered valuable as a good in itself. The former is easier to assess but the latter is essential for the consolidation of a democratic culture.

Across the three countries, the most valuable and irreplaceable contribution of the NIMD programme was the response to the 2012 coup in Mali. CMDID was used as the initial forum to discuss the democratic transition immediately following the coup d'état of 2012, permitting forces opposed to and sympathetic with the coup to engage in dialogue and present their perspectives. The forum was held only ten days after the coup, which underlines the great benefit of a pre-existing platform. It is questionable whether an inclusive dialogue could have been organized at such short notice if such a platform had not existed. By contrast, the pre-existing Guatemala permanent forum tried, but was unable, to deliver a joined-up response to the April 2015 political crisis.

Some other concrete results from dialogues have included a small number of specific laws or agreements influenced by the multiparty platforms:

- *Enabling the adoption of important laws by facilitating consensus.* In Guatemala, the forum played a key role in preserving an integrated approach to security and justice, against positions that intended to skew the law towards punitive measures. In Mali, dialogue and lobbying by political parties facilitated the adoption of a new law on the status of the opposition. It was intended to reduce the 'winner-takes-all' aspects of democratic politics and thus discourage exit through boycott or attempts to enlist the support of the military for a seizure of power.
- *Election code of conduct agreements in Mali and Guatemala.* The Mali platform fostered peaceful elections in 2013 through its major emphasis on promoting dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences during the election campaign, as well as training political party election observers. However, such a contribution could not be identified in Guatemala in the preparations for the 2015 September elections, which were being held in a context of political instability due to ongoing high-level political scandals and resignations.

In all three countries NIMD made a significant contribution in terms of a recognition of political dialogue's intrinsic value.

- The idea and practice of multiparty dialogue seemed to have become part of the political culture in Mali and Guatemala. NIMD teams played a significant part, as NIMD was the main backer of the multiparty platforms. This was the case in Guatemala even though the forum in its current incarnation was no longer seen as



effective; politicians nonetheless told the evaluation team they wanted a space for multiparty dialogue and NIMD would be the best-placed organization to support it.

- In Georgia, dialogues were funded by others before NIMD, and NIMD dialogue efforts were more limited than its political party assistance, but the evaluation nonetheless concluded that NIMD contributed to a changing tone in Georgian politics. Many political party representatives noted that NIMD-organized multiparty events represented the best, and in some cases the only, multiparty dialogues in Georgia, and were conducted in a constructive and non-confrontational manner. The fact that youth politicians from Armenia and Azerbaijan were willing to collaborate in the regional dialogues supported by NIMD also demonstrated greater trust, and was another example of changes in values and behaviour.

Across all countries, NIMD was able to achieve visible results on gender.

- In Georgia, there was a thematic task force dedicated to gender. NIMD was able to reach a consensus among all parties on the introduction of legal instruments to stimulate women's participation in political parties and in parliament.
- Mali required the participation of women in party delegations to CMDID activities, in a country with extremely low rates of female political participation.
- In Guatemala, NIMD's long-term assistance to the forum's Women's Commission led to alliances across parties, such as women training other women politicians.

Progress appeared to have been more modest with regard to ethnicity across all three countries. Work in Georgia was only beginning as the OSCE project started in 2014. Political parties had started talking about the problems of national minorities. Few parties have any interest in or incentive to address these issues without encouragement, which the establishment of a task force aims to provide. Platform results were less visible on indigenous/ethnic issues in Guatemala and Mali.

3.1.3 Main findings

NIMD's reputation for neutrality and impartiality, responsiveness to local issues, local ownership of the dialogues and excellent political networks was a precondition for success in all three countries, essential for convening political parties and generating trust; but it was not a sufficient condition for success.

The different structures of the party platforms may not be a key factor in explaining their effectiveness. The Guatemala forum, which was permanent and covered a wide range of issues and activities, became less influential over time and adopted a more bureaucratized structure, with 10–12 commissions and different layers of coordination and decision-making. However, this bureaucratization may have been a symptom of a wider problem rather than the cause of its lack of influence. The platform in Mali is also a permanent structure and yet it has been able to have a significant influence on key events in Mali's democratization process.

The different focus of the party platforms may also not be a key factor. The inception report hypothesized that issues-based dialogue (as in Georgia) offered the possibility of achieving more focused and concrete results than more broadly based dialogue (as in Guatemala) (Rocha Menocal, 2015a: 16). However, the Mali platform was also a general rather than a thematic platform, but it played a valuable role because it could deliver a timely response at a time of crisis.



The participation of the right leaders in the platforms was essential to give any agreements reached substance. Almost all the political parties participated in the Mali platform and appeared to feel well represented. The level of participation in the multiparty task forces in Georgia was relatively high, by Members of Parliament who could influence internal decision-making in their parties. By contrast, the Guatemala forum was unable to attract the right political participants and was less well adapted to the nature of political party incentives, which became a design flaw. The forum's senior political counterparts were the political parties' Secretaries General, who may not have influence over their parties' leadership in Congress or powerful actors outside of formal party structures. Platform participants were usually second-tier politicians or party cadres, unable to take forum decisions to their own parties or to Congress. The assumptions behind the intervention logic did not hold. NIMD staff did not seem to sufficiently apply their knowledge of how politics and power really operated in Guatemala and let the forum continue.

Given the importance of the right level of participation, NIMD is navigating a complex terrain, balancing effectiveness with inclusion objectives.

- **Platforms gave equal access to all players—small or strong—so promoted inclusion.** In all three countries, small and large/governing parties had different interests and incentives. In general, the smaller parties in each of the three countries valued the platform more than large ones or those in government. Platforms gave small parties a voice in processes from which they would otherwise have been excluded. By contrast, the Rally for Mali, UNM when it was in power and Georgian Dream in Georgia, and the ruling Partido Patriota and Líder in Guatemala were less engaged.
- **Consistent participation criteria were important** to make inter-party dialogues effective and contribute to the development of multiparty democracy. In Georgia, for example, while most major parties were invited to join the dialogues, their interaction with NIMD outside of these official settings appeared much more limited than that of other parties, including those that are much smaller. This could make the inter-party dialogues less effective, and limit NIMD's impact on the development of multiparty democracy. By contrast, all registered political parties could participate in Mali or Guatemala, and most did, although with different levels of seniority.
- **The different degrees of inclusion of non-political actors could reduce the platforms' contribution to greater political party legitimacy.** The Guatemala forum commissions were open to civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate in policy discussions, whereas in Mali the platform appeared closed to significant social and political players, for example, from the north of the country, so led to the exclusion of significant parts of society and political actors.

Overall, salience and fit in the political context, and relevance for powerful political players rather than a generic thematic focus or a specific structure, were more likely to be better explanations of the differences in effectiveness of multiparty dialogues in promoting greater trust and consensus between parties. This finding is consistent with wider evidence, such as Wild et al. (2011:23), which noted that dialogue needed to target the right audience or individuals, with a specific purpose.

Political contextual factors, such as political instability, made interventions more difficult but do not seem to be a determinant. NIMD was able to achieve results in very difficult



environments, such as Mali. Its ability to adapt interventions as contexts changed was more relevant to its effectiveness.

The interventions had some programme sustainability, in terms of influencing the local culture of political dialogue, but none of the platforms were financially sustainable without NIMD assistance. NIMD has tried to seek state or parliamentary funding in Mali and Guatemala but has not succeeded to date. This is a critical issue for CMDID in Mali, which is examined in section 4.4. NIMD may wish to reconsider the extent to which it sees platforms as a permanent, lasting features of the countries where it operates, or as a tool to help achieve a change in the political culture until such a time as parliaments or other dialogue mechanisms become more effective. The considerable time it took NIMD Guatemala to decide, in mid-2015, to end its support to the Permanent Forum of Political Parties, even though its decline had been visible for almost a decade, indicates a deep attachment. It also points to weaknesses in strategic management and M&E systems, something which is reviewed in section 4.3.

3.2 Legitimate political parties

This section reviews the intervention logic, describes the main programme activities (both political party assistance and parliamentary assistance), identifies results and provides the main findings, including on internal and contextual effectiveness.

3.2.1 Intervention logic

NIMD is one of a small number of international organizations that work specifically with political parties. The second objective of the 2012–2015 MAP was to contribute to the legitimacy of political parties, with a focus on improving their policy-seeking capacity. NIMD's analysis is that 'parties seem to lack the capacity to *aggregate* and *articulate* the interests of the electorate' (NIMD, 2011b:16), leading to low levels of trust by citizens. The MAP highlighted support to parties' internal organizational development (training in policy development, negotiation and strategic planning), assuming that parties would then be encouraged to use policy to guide their decisions. The theory was that combining policy capacity development with greater engagement with citizens and civil society (under the third MAP intervention area) should lead to greater trust and therefore greater legitimacy (Rocha Menocal, 2015a:17).

The 2014 thematic evaluation of NIMD's political party assistance support is important. It notes that direct (or bilateral) support to parties does not appear to be an effective way of bringing about structural changes within parties or the wider political system (Schakel and Svåsand, 2014: 55).

The country portfolios under this MAP objective were much more diverse than the other two MAP objectives. Assistance to political parties' policy-seeking capacity took three forms, the third of which was not an explicit part of the MAP offer:

- Bilateral party assistance
- Multiparty assistance
- Parliamentary assistance, especially in Guatemala



3.2.2 Political party assistance activities and results

Overall, Georgia had the most extensive and sophisticated approach to political party assistance. It balanced inter-party work with direct party assistance. It used the new tool it had developed on strategic planning. It worked closely with most major, and some relatively minor, political parties throughout most of this period, which was one of transition from a one-party to a multiparty system. It innovated, developing a website where it put an analysis of political parties' election programmes. There were fewer activities in Mali, as CMDID did not want to undertake political party assistance during elections which took place in most years, so direct party assistance only happened in 2011. In Guatemala, most of the work under this objective was directed at Congress. Direct and multiparty assistance was less visible, as it was integrated as part of *Foro* capacity building and the Democracy School training.

The approaches in Georgia and Mali shared a number of similarities. Bilateral assistance was limited to some parties, including parliamentary parties in Georgia and the five largest parties in Mali (smaller parties received some less exclusive support). Bilateral training was usually technical in nature, in Georgia helping parties to develop strategic plans and fundraising plans, sharpen their ideologies or otherwise function more effectively. In Mali, CMDID supported party secretariats, strategic plans and party cadre training. Multiparty assistance in Mali focused on multiparty election training and in Georgia consisted of the thematic task forces.

Guatemala's political party assistance was different. The country evaluation identified small but significant assistance to only one party, the indigenous people's political party, Winaq, created in 2011, which only has one member of Congress, with the definition of its policies on gender, diversity and internal equity. The evaluation team did not identify a clear strategy to explain this approach to political party assistance. Nor could it find evidence of NIMD assistance to four parties to develop their plans for government. The Guatemala programme re-emphasized direct capacity building support in 2014. This does not appear to be consistent with the MAP, which focuses on policy strengthening, or with the 2014 evaluation findings. Its multiparty activities seemed to have been more traditional training of party cadres in its Democracy School.

NIMD's direct party assistance results are hard to identify, especially in Mali and Guatemala, as it was done on such a small scale. Recipients of the assistance were positive about it and wanted more. However, there was only limited evidence that it actually helped parties perform better, and develop new policies they would use or better links with citizens. Multiparty assistance to the elections in Mali seemed to have been more effective and contributed to more peaceful elections in 2013, but it cannot be compared to the bilateral assistance which was suspended in 2012. The approach in Georgia seems to have been better grounded in evidence (Wild et al., 2011: 22; Schakel and Svåsand, 2014) than in Guatemala. It provided tailored advice, rather than more generic training and courses, and was explicitly focused on policy and ideology, rather than capacity development as appears to have been the case in Guatemala.

It seems to have been easier to address gender than ethnicity in party assistance. Most of the work took place in Georgia, which had incorporated gender into much of its programming with political parties. Several parties reported that NIMD had helped them establish women's wings, while others indicated that NIMD had worked with them to develop an internal party position regarding quotas for women on parliamentary lists. Less



progress, however, was made with regard to ethnic diversity in Georgia. Guatemala's main achievement was its partnership with Winaq but this was on a very small scale and there was no evidence of gender in direct party assistance. In Mali, CMDID did involve all political parties, which all included representation of all ethnic groups. However, it did not directly address ethnicity, a sensitive subject in the context of the recurring rebellions in the north which are associated with Tuareg, Arab and other minorities. The evaluation teams did not find sufficient information about youth in multiparty dialogue and party assistance to draw a comparison across the countries.

3.2.3 Parliamentary assistance activities and results

There was most parliamentary assistance in Guatemala and almost none in the other two countries, which makes it hard to make meaningful comparisons. In Guatemala, this included technical assistance for Congress commissions, to improve policy and legislation, for example, on transparency, human rights and agriculture; support for strategic legislation, for example, on electoral law, civil service law and the Congress organic law; and general training of members of Congress, their advisers or journalists reporting on Congress. There were few visible results. Few significant laws on which NIMD worked were passed in the period. Technical assistance as currently provided by senior experts or law students was not sustainable without NIMD support. Congress is a very hard environment in which to have influence, especially as commissions and Congress presidents change on an annual basis. In Mali, CMDID supported parliamentary groups on parliamentary draft procedures and draft legislation, and provided knowledge on content in collaboration with a UNDP-supported project. This helped the debate on the status of the opposition, and contributed in a small way to a more effective political opposition in parliament, although the political realignment following the 2012 coup was the main driver of change. In Georgia, there was no direct institutional NIMD support for parliament. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute work extensively with parliament, so this is a less useful and strategic place for NIMD to be.

This comparison raises questions about the focus of parliamentary assistance in relation to NIMD's mandate and strategy. The NIMD Guatemala programme has had a long-standing commitment to working with Congress (since 2006). The office chose to focus on Congress as the place where parties exercised their power between elections, in a context of high fluidity of political parties. Each party lasts only an average of 1.6 electoral events (Novales, 2014:1). Once an election is over, political activity ceases in the party. Yet, NIMD did not limit its assistance to political party activities in Congress and instead focused mostly on the institutional capacity of Congress, which would seem to be beyond NIMD's core niche, and where it achieved very limited results.

Work on strategic legislation and other reforms that can influence the political party system as a whole, rather than Congress institutional strengthening per se, would seem to be a better fit with the MAP party system reform objective, and in time could deliver more sustainable gains in terms of NIMD's overall deeper democracy vision than direct party assistance. Mali's reform of the role of the opposition under its multiparty platform objective was another example of a political party system reform that was important for democratization.

There is now greater attention to citizens' engagement with Congress in the Guatemala programme, which could lead to more significant results, like the collaboration with the Winaq member of Congress when he was President of the Transparency Commission. With



NIMD facilitation, he established municipal Transparency Commissions that led to some mayors being held to account.

3.2.4 Main findings

A number of overall findings are consistent with the other intervention areas:

- **NIMD was context-sensitive:** it adjusted its activities to the different political contexts. In Georgia, it was able to make a contribution to the transition to multiparty democracy by working with a wide range of parties, in government and opposition, at a time of transition away from one-party rule. It contributed to Mali's return to and consolidation of democracy after a military coup. A focus on Congress made sense in Guatemala as this was where parties were active outside of election periods.
- **NIMD support for the smallest parties was appreciated the most.** In Guatemala, this was Winaq, which only had one member of Congress. In Georgia direct party assistance programmes had the most significant impact on smaller parties such as New Rights, the Free Democrats and the Republicans. In both countries, these parties were small enough to need a great deal of assistance, but also all had competent leadership that was open and receptive.
- **NIMD was responsive to local capacity and local demands.** In Georgia, NIMD designed its programmes to give each party what it needed and could absorb, through a collaborative series of discussions with representatives from the parties. It responded quickly to the rapid rise of the new ruling party, Georgian Dream, anticipating it. In Guatemala, it identified Winaq's needs. Better results in Georgia seemed consistent with the wider evidence which notes that a minimal level of capacity is required for bilateral assistance to be effective (Wild et al., 2011: 22; Schakel and Svåsand, 2014: 54).

Political contextual factors influenced effectiveness to a significant degree, as these interventions are much more directly dependent on political change and the incentives of political players. NIMD operated in a more enabling environment in Georgia, with its move towards greater democratization and incentives for European integration. It faced a more challenging environment in Guatemala, as political parties change frequently, and in Mali, where elections either took place or were planned every year. Again, NIMD's ability to adapt to the true nature of politics and refresh its assumptions proved key to its relevance and effectiveness.

The MAP, which placed greater emphasis on policy development skills for parties, and the 2014 political parties' evaluation do not seem to have had much influence on country programmes or in leading to improved results. Each country programme developed its own portfolio, adapting it to the context. For example, there was an enabling environment in Georgia, where parties could use the assistance, whereas bilateral and multiparty assistance was adapted to the frequent elections in Mali. However, sometimes the balance between adapting to context and simply continuing with a pre-existing portfolio without taking strategy and evidence into account was not clear. The issue of MAP influence is examined further in section 4.5.

Programmatic sustainability was weakest when programmes were not aligned to political incentives, for example, Congress factional politics in Guatemala, and greatest when



partners were committed to change but had access to fewer resources, for example, the weaker political parties in Georgia.

3.3 Fruitful interaction between political and civil society

This section reviews the intervention logic, describes the main programme activities, including the Democracy Schools and other interventions relevant to this MAP objective, identifies results and sets out the main findings on internal and contextual effectiveness.

3.3.1 Intervention logic

The third objective of the 2012–2015 MAP is ‘fruitful interaction between political and civil society’ (NIMD, 2011b). Focusing on the links between political parties and other groups in civil society and fostering more fruitful engagement between them is essential to building trust and increasing the legitimacy of political parties in the eyes of the population. This objective thus also contributes to the other two MAP objectives: it improves political dialogue and enables parties to develop relations with citizens in order to represent their interests.

This objective was not historically a core area in NIMD’s work, given that political parties are seen as NIMD’s principal stakeholders. There had been intense debate across the organization and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about whether to include it in the MAP (Rocha Menocal, 2015a: 20).

This objective seems also to have been influenced by country programmes’ own experiences, including those of the Guatemala Office. In the post-Arab Spring context, the new NIMD Guatemala Director, together with African offices, is reported to have made a strong case for democracy schools to include work with civil society, rather than be limited to political actors.

3.3.2 Democracy Schools

Democracy Schools and additional civil-political society processes are an excellent NIMD innovation which have led to concrete results. Democracy Schools were the main intervention used to promote fruitful civil-political society interaction in Georgia and Guatemala. There was no such school in Mali, where political education was focused on politicians. This was reportedly due to a lack of funding and the strategic decision on the part of NIMD not to educate a group of political actors, although in the view of the evaluation team this could be part of a future strategy for change in Mali.

NIMD Georgia had the most sophisticated approach, with multi-month long courses focused on civil society activists in four cities. The NIMD Guatemala school consisted mostly of a series of different courses for different audiences, with different modules that could run over several months. Courses and events were sometimes mixed political-civil society and sometimes just for political parties, just for Congress politicians/staff/journalists or just for CSOs. Overall, it was not yet a school with a unified methodology and expected results.

The Georgia Democracy School had had visible results. Around five hundred alumni of democracy schools continued to play an important role in the civic life of their respective cities. Democracy School alumni described their experience as having a very significant, almost life-changing, impact. The school seemed to have been successful because it was well



designed, had a clear focus (democratic governance, democratic policy and political action issues), proactive selection of participants and follow-up activities linked to small grants and a boot camp.

The Guatemala school organized 92 events for 1900 people between 2012 and 2014 (both courses as well as other events). Participants in the Guatemala education programmes were all very positive, and a few had been able to use concretely what they had learned. For example, an indigenous leader understood and was then able to apply the mandate of his representative indigenous organization to make its voice heard in the right forums. However, the evaluation could not identify the wider effect, in terms of creating a cadre of mobilized actors, that seemed to be the case in Georgia. The Guatemala school offered a wide range of courses on very broad topics, and the office did not seem to be actively selecting and following up participants.

Gender and diversity were generally well addressed in the democracy schools. This shows the importance of targeting these issues systematically in design, implementation and monitoring. Regional exclusion was a particular topic: the Georgia school was explicitly focused on four cities in the regions, and the Guatemala school delivered courses in nine departments in addition to the capital. In Georgia, there was a good gender balance among democracy school students, as approximately half the participants were female, and there was a module to raise awareness of gender issues as part of the human rights curriculum. There was a good age range in Georgia, reflecting the country's population profile. In Guatemala, the majority of participants were women and youth, and gender issues were reflected in course content and the choice of presenters. Indigenous issues were well covered in Guatemala, with prominent indigenous trainers presenting relevant sessions, some courses specifically designed with indigenous issues as a focus, and good participation from indigenous women and men. In Georgia the participants were almost all ethnic Georgians.

On the basis of NIMD data, it is difficult to evaluate how the schools influenced the objective of more fruitful civil-political society relations. An M&E system is needed that tracks behaviour change and not just events. What can be said is that this objective was achieved to a much more limited extent in Georgia, as the Democracy School was mostly designed for civil society activists, while political parties had less awareness of the courses and participated to a lesser degree.

3.3.3 Other interventions

The Democracy School was not the only intervention NIMD country programmes used under this objective. In Guatemala, a regional programme with CORDAID on environmental security promoted civil society-political dialogue on environmental issues, but it did not form part of this evaluation. The office also regularly involved CSOs in the forum's thematic commissions and in Congress commissions. Indeed, the Guatemala programme strategy changed to explicitly promote greater engagement with citizens and civil society, and a Swedish funded participatory democracy grant in 2014 supported a different approach in Congress in response to the more limited progress that could be made simply by working with political parties.

The scale of civil-political society engagement was more limited in Georgia and Mali than in Guatemala. NIMD Georgia only organized a few joint seminars with leaders of political parties and Democracy School representatives, for example, to discuss urban development



issues, to establish contacts and to explore possibilities for cooperation. The multiparty task forces on both women and minorities also brought parties into contact with civil society leaders and organizations, but this was a peripheral effect. In Mali, CMDID invited CSOs to participate in some activities involving broad popular mobilization, such as a concert to encourage citizens to vote in the 2013 election, and in the creation of communal 'dialogue spaces' in various towns at which citizens and civil society were able to meet with political party figures.

In Mali, CMDID innovated by sponsoring public debates broadcast on national television and radio. It is not clear where these activities fit in the wider NIMD strategy but they were an opportunity to apply innovative public education approaches to bringing political debate to citizens. In Georgia, NIMD innovated by comparing political parties' election programmes and publishing the comparison on a website.

3.3.4 Main findings

In all three countries these interventions were relevant, given the distrust that politicians have towards organized civil society, which is seen as donor-funded NGOs or actual political rivals, or even the contempt of the ruling party in the case of Georgia. NIMD Guatemala's greater ability to organize joint events may be attributed to the sophistication of civil society, which had been engaged in advocacy and lobbying since the conclusion of the 1996 Peace Accords. In Mali and Georgia, the country programmes plan to undertake more efforts in the coming years, which seems an appropriate response to the sense of citizen alienation from political parties and the political process, especially in Mali.

This was probably the least coherent NIMD intervention area, not always clearly addressed, covered by disparate activities or not sufficiently linked to the overall NIMD country objective. The Democracy School in Georgia was not as well linked to the rest of the programme, which is focused on political parties, as in Mali, and in both countries other civil society-political society interventions were few, by design. Guatemala's Democracy School courses and events were by contrast very numerous, but they were well linked to the overall strategy and portfolio.

The schools cannot be designed with a view to achieving financial sustainability in the short term so NIMD needs to plan for the longer term, towards an achievable and realistic objective. Because it is not solely limited to political parties, this part of the NIMD portfolio could be funded by donors. Programme sustainability depends on adopting an approach that goes beyond training to behaviour change. Local institutional partnerships could take over the courses in the medium to longer term.

Contextual factors went beyond political ones explored under the other interventions. Challenges included low levels of trust between government and civil society and low levels of domestic civil society capacity. However, NIMD is able to control these interventions to a greater extent by selecting topics, participants, and so on, and they are less affected by unpredictable political developments. An experienced civil society in Guatemala or high capacity in Georgia mean there could be more uptake under this objective.



3.4. Gender and diversity as a cross-cutting theme

This section reviews the intervention logic, describes the main programme activities, identifies results and sets out the main findings on internal and contextual effectiveness.

3.4.1 Intervention logic

The evaluation terms of reference required an examination of cross-cutting issues. Gender and diversity was the most visible such theme, as anticipated in the inception report, and was therefore prioritized in the country evaluations. However, the 2012–2015 MAP only mentioned gender once as a cross-cutting issue without providing guidance, noting only that it would be further discussed in the coming months (NIMD, 2011b: 17). It also highlighted the NIMD principle of ‘Inclusivity – working with all ruling and opposition parties in the dialogue process, but also related to the focus on including all groups in society that have a stake in the public good with an emphasis on women, youth and minorities’ (NIMD, 2011b: 18).

Greater political participation by excluded groups is central to achieving NIMD’s vision of deeper democracies, and this was a salient issue in all three countries. However, NIMD has adopted a highly decentralized and ad hoc approach to the implementation of this principle. As noted in the inception report (Rocha Menocal, 2015a: 28-29), there were no formal management commitment to mainstreaming, no guidelines, no central support and no M&E, risk management or ‘do no harm policies’ on what can be highly sensitive and complex issues.

3.4.2 Gender and diversity country programmes’ activities and results

Gender, ethnicity and youth were addressed in all three country programmes but not in a consistent manner at the level of analysis, strategy or planning.

- Only Mali had an explicit cross-cutting objective, with a gender action plan and two programme staff recruited on women and youth. Its gender work was grounded in research and planning, including a detailed study of the need and strategies to ensure that women activists are able to assume an equal role in Malian political life.
- Guatemala had a long-term commitment to inclusivity but only some programmes had cross-cutting objectives, such as the Swedish-funded participatory democracy engagement with Congress or the environmental security programme targeting UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (on women and conflict), which was a Dutch foreign policy priority.
- The Georgia portfolio did not have an overarching gender or diversity country objective.

All three main NIMD intervention areas contained relevant activities; Democracy Schools were best-suited and political party assistance the least:

- Democracy Schools in Georgia and Guatemala systematically encouraged women, and well as youth and indigenous people to Guatemala, and included those issues as part of the training content.
- Multiparty platforms included opportunities for thematic discussions and action on gender, ethnicity and youth political participation; for example, women from across



all political parties worked together in *Foro's* Women's Commission in Guatemala. In Georgia, the three multiparty task forces each focused on inclusion, gender, ethnicity and youth.

- Integration seemed more difficult in the direct support to political parties, although NIMD Guatemala assisted *Winaq* and NIMD Georgia helped parties craft internal strategies and positions to increase the involvement of women in political life, for example, by creating a women's wing or strategies for appointing more women to positions of leadership in the regions.

NIMD seems to have achieved the most on gender, and only to a lesser degree on ethnicity/indigenous/youth issues. Regional exclusion was not a cross-cutting concern and religion appeared absent. This may reflect the fact that gender and women's rights have become better established agendas, while ethnicity and other inclusion issues remain more sensitive—although this would have to be further tested.

- **The approach to gender was mostly around targeted activities on women's empowerment rather than gender mainstreaming** (for example, dealing with men's perception of women). Mali had the most systematic approach, involving training for women's leaders, regional women's committees and requiring women to participate at all events. Georgia innovated with a gender index, an inter-party ranking on gender collated with 20 political parties in order to promote dialogue.
- **Ethnicity was also addressed through targeted actions.** Efforts were most visible in Guatemala where, despite high levels of continuing exclusion, political and social mobilization is making some progress and there are good partners with which NIMD can collaborate. There was little progress in Georgia, where the task force engendered some useful conversations and each party committed to create action plans on increasing national minority representation. NIMD Georgia is planning to fund interns from ethnic minorities. The Mali programme has not directly addressed ethnicity but NIMD is looking at how to promote dialogue with disenfranchised groups in the north of the country.
- **The most visible youth intervention was in Mali**, where there was support for the creation and development of an enthusiastic association of youth engaged in political parties. The evaluation team did not review the South Caucasus regional youth dialogue programme. Overall, it found that it was appropriate not to make youth a priority in Georgia, given the age profile of the country and the risk of alienating older citizens, who may be more susceptible to non-democratic and pro-Russia appeals.
- **Regional exclusion** was also considered in the Democracy Schools and other training by undertaking events outside the capital, but there does not seem to have been a systematic approach beyond this.
- **Other salient inclusion issues do not seem to have been explicitly addressed.** For example, the dependence of political parties on non-secular groups, and the rise of violent religious extremism could be addressed in Mali.

3.4.3 Main findings

NIMD's willingness and ability to focus on gender and diversity were relevant and constitute value added with significant potential. It helped each country address significant exclusion issues important to improving representativeness and deepening democracy. In general NIMD was particularly appreciated by less powerful stakeholders, including under-



represented social groups, which could collaborate with NIMD to access powerful actors. This is a comparative advantage of which NIMD could probably make more.

The main the internal and programmatic findings are:

- **A long-term investment** with relevant organizations can bear fruit, such as over 10 years in Guatemala with MOLOJ and other women's organizations.
- **Targeted 'affirmative action' type initiatives** will have the most impact on small and resource-starved organizations, such as Guatemala's only indigenous people's political party, Winaq.
- It may be possible to **fundraise specifically on such issues**, as was successfully the case with UN Women in Mali or OSCE in Georgia.
- **However, approaches and degrees of investment were not consistent.** It would be good to understand further the reasons for this. Dedicated staff, targeted projects and donor funding seemed to make an important difference, but progress would not be sustained without NIMD commitment.

Contextual factors influenced which diversity issues could be most easily addressed.

- **The NIMD office is itself part of a country's social context.** For example, CMDID was somewhat hampered in its ability to address representativeness, given that it is an organization of political parties that are for the most part dominated by older men. Given that the NIMD offices in Guatemala and Georgia are also embedded in the local culture, it would be useful to examine further the extent to which this has enabled or undermined further progress on gender and diversity issues.
- **Alliances with leaders of CSOs or social movements** could lead to more progress on political participation, especially where they are more established or particularly committed, for example, women's groups in Guatemala or the youth organization in Mali.
- NIMD was able to achieve **less progress on deep and entrenched social norms**, such as gender discrimination in Mali, racism in Guatemala and discrimination against minority ethnicities in Georgia.

NIMD has not adopted a strategic approach that could be assessed for its sustainability. A strategy is needed to address the main barriers to political participation, drawing on evidence. For example, a twin-track approach of participation in formal, male-dominated, political organizations together with support for women's autonomous organizations is consistent with recent research findings on how to support women's political leadership (Domingo et al., 2015). A focus solely on women's participation in political parties or training would be less effective.



4. NIMD organizational effectiveness

The second objective of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the 2012–2015 MAP, the 2014 Theory of Change and the accompanying institutional reforms led to increased effectiveness. The evaluation terms of reference also asked to what extent NIMD operated as an adaptive and learning organization. The updated methodology unpacked and regrouped these questions in order to understand what drives NIMD's organizational effectiveness and to make appropriate recommendations in response to the evaluation's third objective.

This section therefore synthesizes the main findings on NIMD's niche and ways of working. It assesses the extent to which it is a responsive, flexible and learning organization, supporting the delivery of its country objectives. It concludes by looking at the HQ reforms, and initiatives such as the MAP from the point of view of country programmes, including whether they have led to greater effectiveness.

It integrates the evidence across all the evaluation criteria (relevance, impacts, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and the evaluation questions set out in the evaluation matrix as they relate to organizational effectiveness issues, as opposed to country programmes or intervention areas. It also draws on the main inception report overview of organizational issues and aims to respond to the questions this raised.

4.1 NIMD niche and value added

The three country evaluations confirmed that NIMD has a clear niche and a good reputation among its main stakeholders. Almost all the people interviewed in Georgia, Guatemala and Mali had a positive view of NIMD. It was most appreciated by its main stakeholders, political parties, but also by civil society organizations, governments, peer organizations and donor agencies, which respected its expertise and professionalism. It was seen as a responsive organization. In Georgia, political parties found NIMD willing to listen and open to feedback, and in Guatemala it was seen as helpful and willing to consider requests.

NIMD was particularly appreciated because of its neutrality, which gave it convening power. In Georgia and Guatemala, it was seen as more neutral than other organizations in the same field. Its convening powers were particularly visible in the multiparty platforms, such as CMDID in Mali. The Guatemala forum had weaker convening powers, but NIMD was still recognized and valued. The Democracy Schools in Georgia and Guatemala gave it particular visibility with civil society.

Its long-term presence, local staff, local networks and partnerships were particular strengths in all countries, and exemplify how NIMD can deliver some of the political party assistance lessons identified in box 1. It has had a presence in Guatemala and Mali since 2002 and 2003, respectively, and been active in Georgia since 2004, demonstrating the long-term commitment to these countries which local stakeholders valued. The calibre and political networking of its senior staff were also appreciated in all three countries. They could operate on a peer-to-peer basis, providing political guidance and advice, rather than foreign models or standard training.

However, the NIMD principles of impartiality and inclusiveness were at times under strain. In each country, some groups had more influence or others had been excluded. This is



something to which NIMD must constantly pay attention, in order not to undermine its otherwise positive reputation with its various stakeholders or its ability to influence system-wide change towards inclusive, multiparty democracy:

- In Georgia, some pro-Russia parties had not been included in programmes, even though they represent political views of segments of the population.
- In Mali, CMDID was governed by political parties themselves, which were often reluctant to engage with some social actors and conflict issues. This means that NIMD needs to find other strategies to enable greater inclusivity in political processes, for example, to respond to the conflict in the north of the country.
- In Guatemala, NIMD has been relying on a very experienced and well respected group of political experts but would benefit from broadening its networks, for example, to include more women, youth or experts from indigenous communities.

4.2 Balancing flexible and strategic approaches

Even though NIMD programmes offer the same ‘menu’, they were adapted to the local contexts and reflected team expertise. In all three countries, NIMD teams delivered to a greater or lesser extent the three strategic interventions identified in the MAP (multiparty dialogue platforms, political party assistance and political-civil society relations). They also paid attention to gender and diversity. Nonetheless, this was not a ‘cut and paste’ approach and each office played to its strengths. CMDID, as a local foundation owned by parties, was able to influence political party dialogue but did not establish a civil society-oriented Democracy School. NIMD Guatemala could draw on the reputation and access of its senior political adviser, who had been President of Congress, to deliver interventions in Congress, which is not a standard NIMD intervention but was where political parties were most active.

Some country teams developed political analysis tools to inform their approaches. NIMD undertook a country analysis in Mali to inform its multi-annual strategy, which was updated after the 2012 coup. NIMD Guatemala had been supporting a group of senior political advisers since its inception, who met on a monthly basis and provided political analysis and scenario planning. Even though the evaluation team could not identify a direct influence on NIMD strategy, several NIMD Guatemala Directors confirmed they found it valuable. In addition to formal analyses, the country evaluations also found excellent political skills and networks in all offices, such as the Georgia Director. Guatemala shows the risks to NIMD’s influence, however, when such skills remain individualized rather than institutionalized.

NIMD’s context-specific and flexible approach was most visible in response to political crises. NIMD was responsive and influential at significant times, such as holding a dialogue to facilitate the response to the Mali coup in 2012. In Georgia, it has been able to adapt programming to the emergence of the Georgian Dream, a new opposition party that emerged in September of 2011 and became the new governing party 13 months later, the impact of the political earthquake of the 2012 elections where the long-standing ruling party lost the election or the current rise of new parties in advance of the 2016 election. Some of these successes were the consequence of risk-taking: investing in processes without knowing in advance what the results would be, but identifying that they could play a role in a democratization context.

Yet, responsiveness was not a consistent strength and, at times, NIMD could also be very slow to change when the assumptions behind its intervention logic no longer held. The



Guatemala programme offers two such examples. It maintained support for its permanent political party forum many years after it had stopped being effective. At the time of the evaluation, it had not yet been able to position itself in response to the April 2015 crisis which required the vice president, and later the president, to resign in the midst of a massive corruption scandal that sparked regular popular demonstrations throughout the country. Management challenges probably led the Guatemala office to respond to complex scenarios or unexpected events by focusing on the activity level. A more relevant response would entail being able to change tactics as often as necessary without losing sight of the strategic objectives.

4.3 Strategic management

A strategic approach was not always visible across country programmes. While, as this synthesis shows, NIMD has delivered important results in a number of very different contexts, it is not evident to the evaluation team that it is always clearly guided by strategic objectives delivered through coherent portfolios. A focus on activities can keep offices very busy, but a shared strategic vision is needed to keep it on track, reallocating resources as the context changes. Country programmes seemed in general more driven by programmes and activities around NIMD's three intervention areas than by a deep understanding of the overall theory of change. For example:

- The Georgia office had a clear strategy but did not articulate its vision of a multiparty Georgia; and the Democracy School, in targeting civil society, was more detached from the rest of the programme.
- The CMDID programme strategy and coherence are built around fostering political party dialogue. It is being challenged to address issues beyond political parties, such as integrating the wider demands of society or responding to the conflict in the north of the country.
- The Guatemala office did not have a shared vision of the programme objectives. It was not clear how its focus on Congress, institutional strengthening or environmental security dialogues would contribute to NIMD's overall objectives.

Country offices were constrained by the management tools at their disposal. The 2012–2015 MAP is the main NIMD-wide strategic document. NIMD HQ programme managers and their country counterparts have a great deal of flexibility in how they plan, deliver and monitor their interventions, within the framework of standard outputs derived from the three MAP objectives and the budget set principally by the Dutch MFA PPII allocation (through a contract or budget memorandum between HQ and the country team). Only Mali had a multi-annual plan used by the office, which was revised after the 2012 crisis. The Guatemala office reported that it had to develop its own planning and M&E frameworks to fulfil its regional role. Annual country plans around programme activities are not always consistent with NIMD annual plans and reports; nor do they include the entire set of objectives and multi-donor resources at the disposal of a country office when these rely on a large number of funders, as in Georgia which has five funders. In addition, the Dutch MFA funding cycle, which requires proposals in November of each year, appears inconsistent with the NIMD programme management cycle, where country programmes' annual reports are completed in January. In the view of the evaluation team, the absence of strategic management tools makes it very difficult for country programme leadership and HQ programme managers to adopt a more effective results-based, as opposed to activities-based, management style.



M&E systems were similarly insufficient to inform strategic management. The approach in Georgia was found to be rather informal; in Guatemala it seemed to be onerous and require significant layers of reporting; in Mali too there was a need for greater guidance from the centre. The methodology section of the introduction to this synthesis has notes a number of deficiencies in the country programmes' M&E systems. In addition, it was not clear to the evaluation team: how the milestones in HQ annual reports were based on country programmes' annual reports; how progress was judged by HQ programme managers in the absence of indicators; and whether there was an internal challenge function in assessing progress. There was a lack of qualitative 'meso' indicators which would provide evidence of changes in values and behaviour, essential to capture the effects of dialogue or Democracy Schools, or indicators to trace the organizational development of political parties as a result of direct or multiparty assistance. Neither the Mali nor the Georgia evaluation teams could find evidence of the use of the new Baseline and Review Toolkit (BART), which was meant to have been rolled out there during 2015. Once rolled out, these tools will help integrate M&E findings into revision and renewal of NIMD programming.

Learning has also been inconsistent across country programmes even though NIMD is clearly a thinking and self-reflecting organization. The country evaluations were able to identify a few examples of proactive learning across offices (such as Georgia staff reviewing projects in other countries; the Guatemala office learning from Democracy School experience in Georgia and Indonesia; and the Regional Africa Programme facilitating South-South learning on party strengthening). However, the uptake of past evaluations seems to have been mixed, with only Mali clearly developing a new strategy based on the previous evaluation. The findings of the 2014 party assistance evaluation do not seem to have been integrated in Guatemala, which renewed its emphasis on party capacity building in 2014.

The limited progress on strategic, evidence-based management seems to be a NIMD-wide challenge, beyond the control of the country programmes. Previous institutional evaluations noted that NIMD required a more strategic approach backed up by better M&E. The 2010 evaluation finding still stands: 'NIMD is strong in developing new ideas and programmes, but has found it difficult to deepen existing initiatives, maintain quality control and build up its knowledge base' (MFA, 2010: 15). This evaluation's inception report clearly describes the wide range of initiatives that have been undertaken since 2011 to strengthen NIMD project cycle management, including planning, monitoring and evaluation (Rocha Menocal et al., 2015a: 34–38). It also notes how challenging M&E can be in the political assistance field, where results, such as greater levels of interpersonal trust, can be intangible; contexts change rapidly in response to unpredictable political developments; and attribution is almost impossible. However, in the view of the evaluation team, as NIMD continues to mature as an organization, it is imperative that it develops and uses appropriate strategic management tools in order to make the best of its highly regarded and unique resources—its staff, local networks and reputation.

4.4 Maintaining delivery with changing financial and staffing resources

None of the country programmes were considered financially sustainable without continued donor funding. Various efforts in Guatemala and Mali to seek domestic funding for the multiparty platforms have not been successful to date. Thus, NIMD's sustainability is contingent on an enduring international commitment to support political party development in the countries where it operates. Longer-term Dutch core funding has clearly been essential in providing NIMD with the visibility and thematic coherence to achieve the results



reported in this evaluation. NIMD now faces a stark choice as MFA core funding reduces: it may be able to seek funding from a broader base of funders by widening its mandate but this could undermine its niche and comparative advantage. The Democracy Schools, and other activities which engage civil society and social movements, may be appealing to a wider set of donors while maintaining coherence with NIMD's mandate. They could also establish domestic institutional partnerships, such as with universities or election management bodies who have mandates for political/civic education.

Country teams have had to adjust to significant changes in their resource base. All countries received reduced core funding from the Dutch MFA during the period. Georgia was the programme most able to both increase and diversify its funding in response to a reprioritization by the MFA. It currently has five donors. The Guatemala office was able to obtain two new grants, one also from the MFA, which therefore did not reduce its dependency on Dutch funding, and another from the Swedish Embassy, although it sought to fundraise from a wider range of donors. CMDID's capacity to fundraise has been irregular, and in some years very limited (see Table 4).

The need to find new donors has brought new pressures but also opportunities. Country offices noted the significant amount of time spent on fundraising and managing various grants, all with different reporting requirements. The Guatemala evaluation team noted the risk of diluting portfolio coherence. The Guatemala office was reliant on a programme to address environmental security for an increasing share of its funding. The thematic entry point was an interesting innovation, but the evaluation team could not identify how it contributed to NIMD's overall objectives. By contrast, a new Swedish grant enabled a refreshed approach to assistance to Congress, focusing on engagement with citizens, which was appropriate in the increasingly difficult political context. In Georgia, OSCE funding is backing a task force on ethnic minorities, while in Mali the UN has funded gender work and support to party education for peaceful elections.

The CMDID model of local independent partners may be coming under strain in Mali. Its status as a local foundation makes it harder to mobilize international networks, both within Mali and globally, to raise resources. Yet, it is also closely associated with NIMD without being fully part of the organization. It may need to diversify its mandate in order to widen its fundraising opportunities, and the country evaluation suggested it would benefit from more regular visits—or even a short-term international presence. This raises wider issues for NIMD in terms of setting up future local partner organizations and its overall organizational vision.

The Guatemala and Georgia experiences also demonstrate the importance of stable leadership within NIMD, and adequate planning for transitions, to maintain performance. In mid-2011, late 2014 and again in mid-2015, the Guatemala Director changed. The regional programme manager also served as interim Director for six months while retaining other responsibilities. This long interim process, with no additional management staff, affected NIMD's visibility and strategic direction, although projects continued. The potential for dependency on leaders was also noted in the Georgia report, where the office reputation is closely linked to its first Director. Lessons could be learned from these experiences to better plan for leadership changes when they happen.

Given the limited management data, it has been difficult to assess the efficiency of the country programmes or the various approaches and tools at their disposal (for example, technical assistance vs. training vs. facilitation vs. peer learning). A local office model with



local staff reduces costs significantly in comparison to international organizations or appointing expatriate heads of offices. Drawing on their experience, the evaluators considered the quantity of activities and results obtained to be good value for money in Georgia and Mali, in comparison with NIMD’s peer organizations, although it was not possible to document this due to the lack of comparative public financial information. The evaluators did not conclude that the Guatemala programme provided good value for money, given the more limited results and the presence of effective local peer organizations as comparators.

The very rough illustrative proxies developed to attempt to determine efficiency seemed to show great diversity. Local office costs ranged between 20 and 35 per cent of the Guatemala and Georgia total budget, which appears to be significant, and does not include HQ overhead costs; and were even higher in Mali at 50–67 per cent, although the share of other donors’ funding towards local overheads could not be verified (see Table 3). A comparative analysis of the achievement of progress milestones in the NIMD Annual Reports also shows the potential for a huge range in efficiency. This could not be adjusted by risk levels, as these do not appear to be a NIMD management tool. Although some milestones could clearly not be met due to changing circumstances, such as the 2012 coup in Mali, the Georgia programme had a very high rate of completion or activities on track, which does indicate good efficiency, probably facilitated by a more enabling environment. By comparison, Guatemala struggled to achieve many of its progress milestones, without having had to face such an unstable and fragile environment as Mali (see annex B).

Table 4: Cost efficiency data, 2010–2015

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Georgia					
Total staff on payroll	2	5	5	6	8
Total budget (including other donors)	116,668	208,269	424,648	498,625	539,435
Share MFA of total budget	100%	100%	67%	50%	57%
Guatemala					
Total staff on payroll	N/A	8	9	9	10 staff + 6 consultants
Total budget including other donors	603,825	621,476	564,385	508,407	526,795
Share MFA of total budget	87%	100%	90%	100%	95.6%
Mali					
Total staff on payroll (paid by NIMD grant)	6	6	6	7	7
Total NIMD budget	539,422	469,739	349,656	387,743	336,107
Total NIMD and other donors	604,527	632,605	406,757	555,343	405,603
Share MFA of total budget	88%	65%	84%	57%	80%

Sources: Total budget from NIMD Annual Reports; other data provided by NIMD.

NB: CMDID local costs paid by other donors not known.

Value for money is difficult to measure for governance programmes but some systems can be put in place that take into account the difficult and unpredictable nature of political assistance (Barnett, 2010). With better management systems, country offices should be able to assess whether they are operating with the right mix of staff expertise/budget, given their objectives, and selecting the best delivery channels (whether to keep delivering themselves, contract individual experts or partner with a local organization). This would help them make



the most of their limited resources, and would not need to undermine flexibility or innovation. They might conclude that a smaller but more strategic and focused programme would be more effective and efficient.

4.5 Influence of central initiatives on country programmes

As noted in the inception report, NIMD underwent significant institutional changes after 2011, with its 'very survival at stake' (Rocha Menocal, 2015: 33). The 2012–2015 MAP set out NIMD's new approach to policy, strategy and organization. The second evaluation objective asked to what extent the MAP had had an impact on country programmes, or led to improved results, especially given its intervention logic and new approach to political party assistance and civil-political society interactions. It also asked about the influence of the 2014 Theory of Change, and of other central innovations such as the BART.

As had been anticipated in the inception report, most of these central HQ initiatives were too new to be evaluated. This was in particular the case for the BART, which was still ongoing during 2015, and the 2014 Theory of Change, which reportedly has not yet been finalized. It was also difficult for the evaluation team to track/separate institutional changes over the two periods set out in the terms of reference: 2011–2014, to assess NIMD's HQ restructuring and follow-on from the 2010 evaluation; while also identifying whether the 2012–2015 MAP had influenced strategies and results.

In addition, the country evaluations only examined NIMD in a bottom-up way, from the perspective of its country activities, so it could not assess what happened between decisions to introduce institutional changes at the HQ level and the apparently limited uptake at the country level. It seems that many reforms have been introduced over the years, but some are yet to be followed through. Fewer priority reforms and a thought through change management process could deliver greater organizational effectiveness.

Guatemala is the programme that was probably the most negatively affected by Dutch MFA policy changes after 2011. Although it retained its long-term HQ programme manager, it suffered a combination of challenges, including the retirement of its highly networked first Director, who had set up the office in 2002, and the move to become a regional programme in order to maintain Dutch MFA funding. Already reduced resources therefore had to be spread more thinly. A new Director had to establish himself in Guatemala and develop a new country strategy while also establishing other offices in Central America. He only stayed in post three years, and was replaced after a six-month gap. These challenges are likely to have influenced Guatemala's delivery of results.

The programmatic influence of the MAP seems to be one of evolution of country programmes rather than radical change. The multiparty dialogue did not appear to have been affected. The greater focus on the policy capacity of political parties was implemented in Georgia, where the tool had been piloted, but was not very visible in Mali or Guatemala. The focus on civil-political society interactions was probably the greatest change introduced by the MAP but some country activities were already in place before. (For example, Guatemala had a history pre-MAP of political education and local level civil-political society engagement.) The change approach does not seem to have been implemented to the same degree in Mali and Georgia. Some inconsistencies remained. Guatemala continued its work with Congress even though it was not in the MAP or reported in the NIMD annual reports.



As noted above, NIMD has to manage a healthy tension between wanting to have a coherent offer through the MAP with standard ‘intervention areas’ and adapting to local contexts. One danger is that the core offer (for example, a multiparty platform) is unlikely to be sufficient or always appropriate to meet wider democratization and dialogue objectives (for example, to deal with crisis in the north of Mali). Country programmes therefore need to be able to adapt their approach to their context, with good political economy analyses and strategic management tools.

These findings highlight a wider tension within NIMD about the relationship between HQ and country programmes, which would benefit from further investigation. Strongly performing offices such as Georgia, which operate in an enabling context, may require more limited support and more of a hands-off approach that fosters local ownership. However, other offices may require more of the management support that could be expected of an international NGO, in terms of systems, procedures and access to knowledge and innovations, which NIMD HQ does not always seem to have provided. At times, the gap between HQ and country teams seemed very big when the latter would benefit from being better integrated into the organization.

The Mali and Guatemala country evaluations highlight a number of areas where NIMD HQ should provide more support and urgently needs to complete some of its internal reforms, some of which only began in 2015, for example, in the areas of:

- Strategic results based management
- The roll out of M&E tools
- Fundraising
- Human resources management
- Procurement and contracting of expertise
- Access to international knowledge and comparative experience



5. Recommendations to position NIMD as a leader in its field

This section responds to the evaluation's third objective, which is to make recommendations in order to improve NIMD's effectiveness to position it as a leader in its field. It makes recommendations on strategic choices (5.1), programming areas (5.2) and how to deepen management reforms (5.3).

5.1 Strategic choices

The synthesis has identified a number of factors that raise fundamental questions about its niche and operating model. In particular, the planned continued reduction in Dutch MFA core funding, confirmed in the 2016–2020 MAP, means the NIMD needs to be very clear about what it has to offer to new funders. The evaluation raises three strategic questions for NIMD management, as some ambiguities on these points remain in the 2016–2020 MAP.

First, NIMD should continue evaluating whether it wishes to remain a political party niche organization or to broaden its focus towards democratization more generally. Fundraising for political party assistance is difficult, as few donors have the appetite for explicitly political work, and the evidence base shows that results are hard to achieve. In order to broaden its appeal, NIMD could decide to offer programmes on political development and democratization more generally, such as support for parliaments, elections, civic education or civil society development. In Guatemala, it is using its access to political society to achieve its thematic objectives, for example, on environmental security. Parliamentary assistance is already present in programmes, but not yet an explicit MAP objective supported by HQ expertise. This would have the benefit of responding to some of the evidence, which includes the importance of better linking political party assistance to parliamentary assistance (Rocha Menocal et al., 2012). However, this strategic option risks bringing NIMD into more direct competition with some well-established democratization organizations, will require upfront investment to develop broader expertise and would certainly dilute NIMD's well-known niche.

Second, NIMD should consider whether it wants to retain its Dutch identity, or internationalize fully. The association with The Netherlands, explicit in NIMD's name, has many benefits and contributes to its reputation for neutrality. However, it also means that NIMD's partners expect it to be accessing Dutch resources, which can make fundraising difficult for some offices while they in fact have to adjust to reduced Dutch core funding. In addition, in the evaluated programmes, NIMD seemed to be making little of its access to Dutch political expertise in its peer-to-peer support. An international NIMD may be able to appeal to a broader constituency but would require a considerable organizational transformation. The 2016–2020 MAP proposes a Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy in parallel to strengthening NIMD as an organization. This would probably benefit from management clarification.

Third, NIMD should decide whether it wants to continue to localize its programmes into a looser network, or whether it wants to strengthen itself as a unified organization. One of NIMD's strengths is its commitment to locally owned, context-specific interventions, drawing on its local political networks. Yet the evaluation showed that the CMDID model of creating local organizations, independent but bound to NIMD through their mandates, is



starting to come under strain. Local organizations have less fundraising capacity and are not always able to address a country's fundamental democratization challenge if they are too closely associated with the status quo. Local organizations may be able to flourish if they are granted more freedom, such as widening out NIMD's core mandate in order to seek funding and develop other partnerships. NIMD faces a related challenge in terms of clarifying its relationship with its local offices, which at times feel very remote from HQ. With local staff and local networks they have unique access and credibility, but some of them are likely to need more support than NIMD HQ is currently providing in order to strengthen NIMD as a single, coherent organization.

5.2 More effective programming

The synthesis also provides specific recommendations on building on NIMD's reputation to achieve even more visible and sustained programme results. **The following would apply to all its intervention areas and cross-cutting issues:**

- **Ensure that interventions are more systematically based on a detailed analysis of the political, social and economic contexts** (see the lessons learned, box 1), using appropriate tools to draw on the country team's own knowledge but also challenging it with external perspectives, and revisiting the overall strategy and project focus and approaches, not just analysis, as the context changes.
- **Continue to proactively balance the key principles of impartiality and inclusiveness**, giving a voice to those groups and interests that may not be properly represented in the political system while maintaining access and influence with all political players to promote change.
- **Be willing to think outside traditional models to achieve NIMD's overall objective** (see the lessons learned, box 1 – forget idealized models). This may mean at times not working directly with political parties, but finding other ways to promote democratic inclusion and participation as well as multiparty democracy.

NIMD can achieve positive, small-scale but strategic results with its multiparty platforms. To build on its achievements to date, NIMD should:

- Design and manage a platform with a view to ensuring its continued salience to and fit with the political context, and relevance to powerful political players, rather than a generic thematic focus or replicating a specific structure.
- Develop consistent, contextually sensitive criteria for participation, including for non-parliamentary parties, civil society and other actors who may not be part of the political party system but are important for pluralistic dialogue.
- Not delay changing its approach; and proactively consider when platforms should come to an end.

Given the limited visible results from direct party assistance, NIMD should re-examine its theory of change:

- Be much clearer on the overall objective: is it about parties' own capacity, the party system as a whole or the role parties play in linking citizens with the state?
- Develop consistent, contextually sensitive criteria on political party participation in both bilateral and multiparty assistance.



- Make a more significant difference, over the longer term, in addressing the political party system rather than working directly with individual parties. This would require setting out a vision for the party system, whether it offers enough choice for citizens, and deciding how it can be strengthened, whether by facilitating the entrance of new parties, for example, to represent excluded groups, or helping system consolidation by not assisting some smaller parties. These are fundamental political, rather than technical, questions to address.
- To address the severe crisis of political representation, especially in Mali and Guatemala, NIMD needs to work with a broader range of actors than only political parties, or even parliaments. This could become a more systematic guiding objective, emphasizing the role of parties in representing interests. This could mean an explicit NIMD goal of greater inclusivity and participation combined with multiparty democracy. It would give NIMD more tools to challenge the political system and to move towards deeper democracy, when political parties have only a limited interest in reform and representation.
- NIMD should decide what is the place of parliamentary assistance in its strategy, policy and programmes. If it decides to make it a focus, it should develop appropriate approaches and tools to support country teams. Research suggests the importance of bringing political party and parliamentary assistance together as part of the broader political system (see box 1).

Democracy Schools and additional civil-political society processes are excellent NIMD innovations which have led to concrete results and should be continued and enhanced.

The adjustments recommended below would enable NIMD to make significant contributions under its new 2016–2020 MAP.

- In order to maintain a context-sensitive approach, there is no reason to introduce a standard approach to the Democracy Schools or this objective across countries.
- NIMD should make sure engagement is not limited to ‘professional NGOs’ but really reaches out to grassroots organizations and citizens, moving from information sharing provided by the schools to fostering political action and political parties’ engagement with the actual daily life concerns of citizens.
- Adopt a strategic approach that tracks behaviour change through appropriate M&E, thinks about sustainability from the start and links activities to the objective of improved civil-political society relations and a democratic culture.

NIMD’s willingness and ability to focus on gender and diversity constitute value added and have significant potential. The new 2016–2020 MAP, which makes gender and diversity a cross-cutting theme, gives NIMD the opportunity to build on its achievements to date to achieve more measurable and significant results.

- Adopt a more systematic and resourced approach, including dedicated staff, support from the centre, guidance, tools, M&E and exchanges of experience.
- The approach should start from an analysis of the country context and barriers to political participation, which may identify new inclusion priorities such as religion, class and geography, in addition to gender, youth and ethnicity.
- This political and social analysis should also include a reflection on the country team’s capacity to address these deeply socially embedded issues.



5.3 Strengthening NIMD internal systems

The need for improved programme management in political party and parliamentary assistance is a known lesson (see box 1). The synthesis could only assess NIMD internal systems reforms from the point of view of country programmes. From this perspective:

- NIMD should complete existing internal reforms in order to adopt a more effective strategic management system, and roll them out to country programmes, reflecting on why some reforms may not have been completed.
- There are many ways in which it could do this and it will need to consider the best approach, for example, whether to appoint a ‘change manager’ or allocate, in a different way, sufficient staff resources dedicated to implementing perhaps fewer priority reforms, rather than focus on programme delivery.
- NIMD HQ should provide more support to the country programmes that need it, in particular for systems improvements such as strategic, results based (as opposed to activities-led) management, M&E, human resources and procurement. This may require a clearer division of roles and responsibilities between country programmes and HQ. Any further decentralization of responsibilities, as provided for in the 2016–2020 MAP, will first require sufficient country programme capacity.
- To help translate the 2016–2020 MAP into strategic, context-specific programmes, NIMD HQ should assist country teams to focus on the theory of change and ensure that they use it directly to inform their work. Greater HQ capacity to identify and share learning, as provided for in the 2016–2020 MAP, should support innovative and effective country delivery.

5.4 Planning future evaluations

The evaluation team was asked to make recommendations to NIMD so it can undertake a more rigorous evaluation in the future:

- Plan an institutional evaluation well in advance and allow for a much longer and realistic timeframe, for example, carried out over a minimum of six to eight months, with feedback loops and including at least four country programmes.
- Integrate the inception phase as a component of the full evaluation rather than creating a separate inception phase and then issuing a call for proposals for the actual evaluation. This is essential to provide a more coherent and holistic approach to the evaluation and ensure continuity throughout.
- Undertake an ‘evaluability’ study and/or evaluation strategy to help determine the feasibility and focus in advance of commissioning an evaluation.
- Plan now to evaluate the impact of the 2016–2020 MAP.
- Only evaluate the impact of institutional changes when these have been in place long enough to start to have an effect. The 2014 Theory of Change was introduced too late in the evaluation period to be meaningfully evaluated.
- If conditions cannot be met for a full institutional evaluation, target an evaluation to a specific theme or context, which can nonetheless deliver accountability and learning.
- Ensure M&E systems can deliver the data required to undertake the evaluation and are being used credibly by country teams before the evaluation begins, safeguarding a link between institutional and country level indicators and data sets.



- Prepare the teams being evaluated well in advance so that they fully understand the approach, data requirements, independence and support required by the evaluation team, as well as the benefits of an evaluation.
- Manage the evaluation process so key documents are shared in advance of fieldwork and their significance explained; all NIMD factual corrections or points for clarification should be provided at the same time in a synthesized and prioritized manner; overall feedback processes should be streamlined and proportionate; and the evaluation team should have direct access to the external steering committee and evaluation sponsor.
- Overall, as included above, adopt and use good M&E and management systems to encourage learning and adaptability on an ongoing basis, providing 'real life' tracking and assessment of progress that can identify what is working well and less well, so the country programmes can adjust accordingly.



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Appendix A: Methodology

Evaluation team

This institutional evaluation was undertaken in two phases. The inception phase produced an inception report (Rocha Menocal, 2015a) and full terms of reference for country programme evaluations (Rocha Menocal, 2015b). The main phase was the independent evaluation of three country programmes. NIMD selected the countries based on the criteria established by the inception phase (Georgia, Guatemala and Mali)

NIMD contracted a different team to undertake the country evaluations and prepare the synthesis. The team included a mix of evaluation, subject and development expertise as well as country knowledge. It was comprised of:

- Laure-Hélène Piron, team leader, responsible for the synthesis and international expert, Guatemala evaluation
- Karin Slowing, national expert, Guatemala evaluation
- Jonathan Murphy, international expert, Mali evaluation
- Naffet Keita, national expert, Mali evaluation
- Lincoln Mitchell, international expert, Georgia evaluation
- Tiko Ninua, national expert, Georgia evaluation
- Alina Rocha Menocal, peer reviewer and inception report team leader

Criteria for country selection

The evaluation's terms of reference set out the criteria to be used by NIMD to select the country programmes, in agreement with the priorities of the external steering committee.

- To ensure sufficient breadth of analysis, it proposed at least three countries to give a broad representation of the range of NIMD's work and of the countries in which it works.
- The existence of previous country level evaluations to provide a 'baseline' for this evaluation, and to allow for the testing of reforms which may have taken place in response to previous evaluation recommendations.
- Significant experience of NIMD operations (at least four years in-country) to assess flexibility to changing conditions over time.

Among the additional criteria were:

- At least one country on which the NIMD and the MFA agreed to gradually decrease MFA funding (a so-called category 3 country) or one country which NIMD has recently exited from, to enable assessment of longer term sustainability;
- At least one of the three countries to be trialling the new results approach (BART);
- At least one of the three countries to be part of NIMD's strategic partnership with IDEA, and to have carried out joint projects;
- Regional representation, if possible selecting from at least two regions;
- Country programmes which work on at least two (but ideally all three) of NIMD's main objectives;



- At least two countries selected to use different modalities of engagement, for example, working through an established NGO, creating a new centre, working through the NIMD office, and so on.
- Evaluation team country knowledge and experience.

Amendments to the Terms of Reference

The three country evaluations were undertaken under an extremely tight timeline (July–August 2015) in order to meet a Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) deadline. As a result, as agreed with NIMD, the evaluation terms of reference developed during the inception phase had to be reduced in scope to remain realistic. In particular, the team amended three of the five original objectives and simplified the inception report evaluation matrix to reduce or group questions. These were organized into a template for country reports and set out in an updated evaluation matrix.

The original terms of reference had five objectives:

- To identify and assess the extent to which selected NIMD country programmes have achieved results in the period 2011–2014, with a focus on NIMD’s three main areas of intervention: multiparty dialogue, legitimate political parties, and civil-political interaction. This would focus on the MAP period 2012–2015.
- To determine the extent to which NIMD’s decision to refine its three main outcomes in its 2012–2015 Multi-Annual Plan (MAP), and accompanying institutional reforms, have led to greater effectiveness. for example, in terms of relevance, focus or greater impact.
- To test the newly developed 2014 Theory of Change against country experience, to help refine assumptions and intervention logics and capture diverse country contexts. This would 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 make recommendations on how to further embed or strengthen NIMD’s internal reforms to position it as an effective leader in its field.

Given the time constraints, the following terms of reference amendments were agreed:

- Not to provide indicators of refine the theory of change assumptions or intervention logic for each country programme, as this would go beyond an evaluation.
- To consider the 2014 Theory of Change in the three country contexts and the range of pathways through which NIMD can facilitate change, although the Theory of Change was likely to be too new to have had significant effect.
- Depending on the available data and evidence, to try to identify intermediate processes and outcomes (or ‘milestones’) that link activities, outputs and longer term outcomes, but not to fully test the newly developed systems for monitoring and results measurement, as these were too new and not used by country programmes.



Other agreed changes to the terms of reference included:

- The terms of reference required the consideration of cross-cutting issues. The team prioritized gender and diversity, as the only NIMD cross-cutting issue which had been more frequently addressed in the country programmes and which had been prioritized in the 2016–2020 MAP. Evaluation questions were brought together in a separate section in order to draw out findings, not only in the three intervention areas but at the level of NIMD strategy, systems and resources.
- The team did not look at the regional responsibilities or programmes of Guatemala or Georgia, or at activities that were not centrally related to the three intervention areas. As a result, it excluded some programmes from detailed investigation, such as the regional youth dialogues in the South Caucasus, the Central America environmental security programme and support to the Economic and Social Council in Guatemala.

Country and synthesis evaluation methodologies

The country programme evaluations adopted a theory-based approach, which is considered more appropriate for political party assistance (Uggla, 2007). They tested the underlying programme logic and the extent to which it was consistent with programme activities and the wider evidence, and contributed to results.

One challenge for the evaluation team was that NIMD has had several intervention logics during the evaluation period. The teams identified the intervention logic as set out in the 2012–2015 MAP, and complemented it with country level strategy or planning documents, as well as with NIMD country programme staff interviews. They identified where the intervention logic had evolved over time.

In addition to the overall updated evaluation methodology, each country team prepared a methodology for their country desk review and mission, highlighting which projects, activities, objectives and/or themes they would focus on, and providing a rationale for such a focus. They proposed a diverse range of sources and materials to draw on. Each team undertook a two-week in-country mission. Interviews included: NIMD staff (programme managers in the Netherlands as well as country teams), direct beneficiaries of NIMD country activities (politicians, civil society, government), peer organizations, such as the NDI, diplomats and other donors (the Dutch Embassy, UN agencies), as well as independent experts from academia or civil society to put NIMD activities in their wider contexts. Focus groups with students (alumni) were used to evaluate the Democracy Schools in Guatemala and Georgia. The document review encompassed: general NIMD documents, such as multi-annual plans, annual plans, annual reports and financial information; NIMD country programme documentation provided by the country team, such as country annual plans, annual monitoring reports, financial information, and so on; and external documents, such as previous NIMD evaluations and wider evidence on political party assistance as well as country-specific studies. Each country report contains a full list of interviews undertaken and documents reviewed. Key evaluation documents have been placed in a dedicated dropbox.

The NIMD country teams helped the evaluators set up a programme of independent interviews and focus groups: in Guatemala and Georgia both in the capital and with field visits; and in Mali only in the capital, Bamako. The evaluation teams presented preliminary findings to the NIMD teams in validation workshops at the end of the field visits. Draft country reports were prepared and submitted for feedback from an external peer reviewer



and from NIMD country teams on points of factual accuracy, before the revised reports were presented to the external steering committee.

The synthesis was prepared on the basis of the inception and country reports. Under each of the three main evaluation objectives, and drawing on the evaluation matrix questions, it identifies similarities and differences in terms of activities, results and explanatory factors across countries and, on that basis, draws findings and makes recommendations. The synthesis report was peer reviewed by the country reports lead authors as well as by the inception phase team leader in order to ensure consistency with the first phase of the evaluation, which had included NIMD interviews and a desk review. The NIMD internal steering committee and country teams were able to comment on factual points before the synthesis report was submitted to the external steering committee.

Difficulties encountered by the evaluation

The main challenge encountered by the evaluation team concerned the difficulty of accessing some NIMD management, monitoring and evaluation data (either centrally or from country teams) on the basis of which to undertake the evaluation. This is a common challenge for organizations working on governance, which is why a theory-based evaluation was a more appropriate methodology. Therefore, this is not a performance-based evaluation, assessing results against plans, and drawing on robust baselines, indicators, milestones and targets.

Some of the methodological difficulties were:

- *Country information:* the country programmes generally did not have baseline data. Only Mali had a multi-annual plan to share with the evaluation teams at the start of the process. Objectives and indicators were not consistent over the evaluation period. Indicators were usually quantitative and activities-based, but were not reported on systematically at the country level. Some documents were provided late in the process, after the missions.
- *NIMD HQ information:* The only systematic multi-annual plan was the central 2012–2015 MAP and intervention logic (Table 1). However, it started one year after the evaluation period, which had been selected to follow-on from the previous evaluation (MFA, 2010) and NIMD's significant institutional reforms in 2011. It included high-level democracy indicators, such as the Freedom House Index, which are not suitable for assessing the impact of a small organization such as NIMD. It also included quantitative output indicators that were not systematically tracked centrally.
- *HQ-country links:* there is a disconnect between central and country level systems. For example, the NIMD annual plans and reports based on the MAP identified annual milestones that did not have indicators, and which were not always consistent with the country plans and reports shared by the local teams.
- *Comprehensiveness:* NIMD central plans and reports do not always include significant country activities funded by other donors. Country teams do not always produce a single plan or report across their various donors beyond the Dutch MFA.

As a result, the evaluation teams drew on NIMD programme documents and NIMD team interviews to determine the scope of planned activities and expected results, and verified activities and results through a wide range of stakeholder interviews in order to triangulate



the evidence. This mostly qualitative approach is deemed better suited to political assistance interventions.



Appendix B: Budget and performance information

Table B1: Full staffing and budget information

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Georgia*					
Total staff on payroll	2	5	5	6	8
Local office costs (Staff + office running costs)	65,000	71,280	83,965	141,521	177,425
Programme budget	66,550	132,750	316,035	276,013	364,799
Total budget (including all donors)	131,550	204,030	400,000	417,534	542,224
Share local costs of total budget	49%	35%	20%	34%	32%
Actual budget (Including all donors, same as annual reports)	116,668	208,269	424,648	498,625	539,435
Share MFA	100%	100%	67%	50%	57%
Number of grants/donors	N/A	N/A	5 MFA PPII 286,393 Canada, Foundation, OSCE, Dutch Embassy	6 MFA PPII 245,807 Canada, Foundation, OSCE, Dutch Embassy, EPD	5 MFA PPII 307,497 UK, OSCE, Dutch Embassy, EPD)
Guatemala**					
Total staff on payroll	N/A	8	9	9	10 staff + 6 consultants
Local office costs (Staff + office running costs)	N/A	N/A	129,304	154,848	158,819
Programme budget	N/A	N/A	393,752	377,227	346,303
Total NIMD budget	476,000	523,056	532,075	505,122	529,960
Share local costs in total budget	NA	NA	24%	30%	30%
Actual NIMD budget		511,569	531,653	499,782	489,490
Total budget including other donors (from annual reports)	603,825	621,476	564,385	508,407	526,795
Share MFA	87%	100%	90%	100%	95.6%
Number of grants/donors	N/A	N/A	4 MFA PPII=521,016, PSO 2 Dutch organizations	2 PPII, PDDSA 25% 125,324) PDDSA	3 MFA: PPII, PPDSA 39% 207,212 Sida



Mali	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total staff on payroll (paid by NIMD grant)	6	6	6	7	7
NIMD budget	N/A	N/A	226,318	194,736	165,393
Local office costs (Staff + office running costs)					
Programme budget	N/A	N/A	123,338	193,007	170,714
Total budget	589,792	470,846	355,146	395,000	335,003
Share local costs of total budget			67%	49%	49%
Actual budget	561,656	413,040	318,493	374,435	336,172
Total budget (from annual reports)***	539,422	469,739	349,656	387,743	336,107
Non MFA donors total	65,105	162,866	57,101	167,600	69.496
Total MFA and other donors	604,527	632,605	406,757	555,343	405,603
Share MFA	88%	65%	84%	57%	80%
Number of donors / grants	3 MFA: 539,422 AEN: 46.955 UNIFEM: 18.150	5 MFA 162,866 UNIFEM: 32.162 RNE 78.633 AEN: 37.689 EU: 14.382	5 MFA PPII 349,656 EU: 12.836 RNE: 762 UNIFEM 20.590 AEN: 22.913	4 MFA PPII 387,743 EU: 22.195 UNIFEM: 31.084 PNUD: 114.321	2 MFA PPII 336,107 UNIFEM: 69.496

* Georgia budget data includes all donors, not just NIMD

** Guatemala data includes NIMD only and all donors

** Mali: only NIMD data; other funds received by CMDID listed below

Proposal for efficiency assessment

In order to try to compare efficiency, the ratings given to annual progress milestones as set out in NIMD Annual Reports have been put in a comparative table, assigning different letters to different levels of performance.

A=according to plan

B=needs attention/no progress

C=completed

D=not started

A majority of As and Cs could indicate good performance, whereas the proportion of Bs could indicate management challenges and the proportion of Ds could indicate unpredictable events, such as the 2012 coup in Mali.



Output 1.1 in the annual report refers to resources allocated to local organizational capacity but the performance milestones all relate to the management tasks. It could therefore be taken as a proxy of office management.

Table B2: Progress milestones as reported in NIMD annual reports, 2012–2014

	2012	2013	2014
Georgia			
Annual reports output 1.1 (mgt) rating	2As 1 C	A 4 Cs (incl. 1 unplanned)	2 As
Other annual reports outputs ratings	1 A 5 Cs 1 D (beyond control)	11 Cs 1 A (started)	4 As 3 Cs 1 B
Guatemala			
Annual reports output 1.1 (mgt) rating	1 B 1 C	2 A 1 C	1 B 1 B
Other annual reports outputs ratings	4 As 4 Bs 1 C	5 As	3 As 4 Bs
Mali			
Annual reports output 1.1 (mgt) rating	A B D	A B	2 Bs 1 C
Other annual reports outputs ratings	1 A 4 Bs 3 Ds (coup-related)	2As 1 D	2 As 1 B 1 C 1 D