NIMD believes that democracy starts with dialogue. By building trust and bringing parties to an inclusive ‘noisy table’, NIMD has acted as a trusted partner in democratization in several countries. Although national context influences how we structure and facilitate dialogue, our five-step trustbuilding model lies at the core of our work. This is the approach we took when working on inclusive dialogue with Ugandan politicians through the Interparty Organization for Dialogue (IPOD).

The platform has been active for ten years, bringing political parties together as equals for open interparty discussions. In what can be a tense political environment, IPOD has helped the parties work together and resolve disputes in areas such as electoral reform and party funding rules.

One such dispute was about a piece of legislation named the Public Order Management Act 2013, also known as POMA.

The issue was how authorities interpreted the legislation. Within the text of POMA, a passage stated that political groups must notify the police in regard to upcoming events and activities. Two conflicting interpretations came from this: some said it mandated simply notifying the police, while others said it meant police permission is required for parties’ activities to go ahead. Many in Uganda’s political opposition feared the latter interpretation could give the police sweeping powers to break up their rallies and other legitimate activities.

The next pages illustrate how through dialogue facilitated by IPOD, parties were able to work on an equal footing to identify, devise and propose solutions for the issues around POMA.
NIMD’s Uganda Country Representative Frank Rusa (left) with party leaders, including President Yoweri Museveni, at the Second Leaders’ Summit in May 2019.

Ugandan Prime Minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda (centre left) with NIMD’s Uganda Country Representative Frank Rusa (centre right) and senior Ugandan officials during the POMA review.

Secretaries General from all five of Uganda’s parliamentary parties, along with the Attorney General and several other senior government ministers, meeting in Kampala in 2019.
Between 2017 and 2019, the IPOD platform managed to bring Uganda's parliamentary parties from holding opposing views to presenting a unified position on the contentious Public Order Management Act (POMA). This is how it happened.

OCT 2017: IPOD EXPOSES ITS MEMBERS TO A DIALOGUE IN ACTION
NIMD facilitates a peer-learning visit for IPOD parties to Zimbabwe where NIMD's partner Zimbabwe Institute successfully instituted a multiparty dialogue platform. The Ugandan delegation was inspired and given renewed faith in the power of dialogue as a tool for democratization.

SEP 2018: IPOD CHAIR ROTATES AND JEEMA REJOINS.
Uganda's ruling NRM party hands the IPOD Chair position to the Uganda People's Congress and the JEEMA party rejoin IPOD after winning a parliamentary seat.

NOV 2018: PARTIES MEET TO SET DIALOGUE AGENDA
Ugandan Prime Minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda joins the IPOD parties' Secretaries General for an agenda-setting retreat. The Ugandan Law Society acts as moderator during the retreat, which ends with the member parties agreeing a four-point agenda for future dialogue.

DEC 2018: FIRST IPOD LEADERS' SUMMIT
The leaders of IPOD's member parties officially meet at the first ever IPOD Leaders' Summit. During the party leaders' dialogue, the interpretation of the Public Order Management Act (POMA) soon emerges as a shared area of concern. All parties agree to participate in the post-Summit discussions on POMA.

MAR 2019: ATTORNEY GENERAL WEIGHS IN ON POMA CONTROVERSY
The Attorney General declares that POMA only requires parties to notify police about their upcoming rallies, rather than seek written permission for them. The ruling unlocks the deadlock between the IPOD parties, opening democratic space and strengthening the dialogue.

APR 2019: POMA CONSULTATIONS BEGIN
The Attorney General ruling paves the way for IPOD to facilitate interparty meetings with the Prime Minister and security agencies. These consultations culminate in a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, attended by the Attorney General, NIMD's Country Representative, and the Secretaries General of all IPOD parties. As a result, cross-party regulations were jointly drafted to clarify POMA.

MAY 2019: SECOND LEADERS' SUMMIT
Leaders discuss the results of the IPOD consultations at the second Leaders' Summit. They commit to regular interparty dialogue with the government and consultations with the National Security Council.

SINCE THEN...
The POMA regulations formulated by IPOD party representatives and the Attorney General have been forwarded to the National Security Council. IPOD parties are expected to host a third Leaders' Summit in 2020, and IPOD has also offered to host dialogue regarding ongoing legal cases on POMA.

2009
The Interparty Organization for Dialogue (IPOD) officially founded. NIMD supports the entire process and establishes itself as a trusted partner for Ugandan parties.

2017
The IPOD dialogue mandate renewed for 2017-2020. The IPOD MoU is signed by Secretaries General of the four political parties represented in parliament rules on its governance. The MoU sets out IPOD's role as a party-owned dialogue platform.

2018
IPOD's Chair position rotated and JEEMA party rejoins. NIMD arranges one-to-one meetings with IPOD party leaders, issuing invites to a future Leaders' Summit. The final meeting, with NRM Chair and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, ends with his pledge to attend the Summit.

2019
IPOD begins bringing parties together. NIMD arranges one-to-one meetings with IPOD party leaders, issuing invites to a future Leaders' Summit. The final meeting, with NRM Chair and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, ends with his pledge to attend the Summit.

2020
Leaders discuss the results of the IPOD consultations at the second Leaders' Summit. They commit to regular interparty dialogue with the government and consultations with the National Security Council.
Party leaders and Secretaries General, including Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (centre right, in yellow) at the first IPOD Leaders’ Summit in 2018.