

THEORY OF CHANGE

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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the Theory of Change (ToC) of the Netherlands Institute of Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). The ToC is the methodology and rationale behind our work in supporting democratization and political parties. It answers five key questions:

- 1 What is the context of NIMD's work?**
- 2 Who is NIMD seeking to influence or benefit?**
- 3 What results is NIMD seeking to achieve?**
- 4 How will NIMD make this happen?**

These questions also guide the structure of this document. In chapter 1 we will discuss NIMD's mandate and field of work, including the current challenges in democratization. After that, NIMD's rationale for supporting political parties is explained in chapter 2. The chapter concludes with the description of NIMD's distinctive approach. The third chapter details the core of NIMD's Theory of Change: our goals and objectives, followed by our strategies in chapter 4. In chapter 5 you will find a summary of our approach.

Every country, every political system, every political culture is different. As a practitioner's organization it is important for us to recognize this diversity and always develop tailor made activities. Therefore, NIMD's Theory of Change is not static. We continuously learn and adapt our strategies. This ToC provides us with the framework to do that.

1 CONTEXT

NIMD'S MANDATE AND NICHE

NIMD was founded in 2000 with a clear mission to assist developing democracies and, specifically, to strengthen their political parties and the system in which they operate. NIMD believes that multiparty democracies create the best conditions for harnessing peace and security, enhancing political stability, and guaranteeing human rights and the rule of law. Democracies arrive at decisions in an inclusive, participatory, transparent, and accountable way, and are broadly representative of different needs in society.

In the most literal sense, 'democracy' means that 'power lies with the people of the community'. This was the definition used in ancient Athens. Over time, the term has evolved and gathered broader meanings, becoming more of a label, a practice, or an ideal in itself in relation to how nations are governed.

NIMD uses the definition of democracy developed by the United Nations General Assembly in its 59th session. They officially identified seven essential elements that jointly make up the core components of democracy:

- 1 Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- 2 A pluralistic system of political parties and organizations
- 3 Respect for the rule of law
- 4 The separation of powers
- 5 The independence of the judiciary
- 6 Transparency and accountability in public administration
- 7 Free, independent, and pluralistic media

Box 1: Core components of democracy (UN General Assembly, 2004)

NIMD uses this as the main reference for its work and as the theoretical foundation for the ToC. NIMD's specific niche is the second element, which is creating a pluralistic system of political parties and organizations. NIMD recognizes that political parties are one of the core pillars of a functioning democracy.

Working with this UN definition is important to NIMD because we do not want to follow the so called 'fallacy

of electoralism', which is the belief that democracy is established solely on the basis of elections. Using the broader definition allows us to focus on the society as a whole, particularly on the participation and representation of marginalized and excluded groups like women and youth.

Democracy is sometimes labeled as a western invention that could be exported, but core democratic elements, like representation and the opportunity to elect one's government, adherence to human rights, and free and open political participation, find a clear universal resonance. Just consider elections where voters queue for hours just to cast their vote, the demonstrations and uprisings against corrupt governments, and social movements that demand better rights for women and minority groups: these actions related to democratic values are observed in all kinds of contexts and cultures around the world.

SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY?

Democracy is, indeed, a powerful idea. But it is certainly not a self-fulfilling prophecy, and optimism regarding democracy and its potential should not stand in the way of recognizing the serious challenges to democratization around the world. Democratic transition does not automatically result in democratic consolidation. Despite the recent waves of democratization and increased economic development, only a few emergent democracies across the developing world have been able to become firmly rooted democracies.

Indeed, over the last decade, many of the emergent countries have entered what Thomas Carothers calls 'a political grey zone' where they seem 'stuck in transition'. As Carothers argues in his article on 'The End of the Transition Paradigm', these countries present 'some attributes of democratic political life, including at least limited political space for opposition parties and independent civil society, as well as regular elections and democratic constitutions. Yet they suffer from serious democratic deficits, often including poor representation of citizens' interests, low levels of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low levels of public confidence in state institutions, and persistently poor institutional performance by the state'.

These types of democracies, which have been described as 'illiberal', 'anocracies', or more generally, 'hybrid' regimes, are 'ambiguous systems that combine rhetorical acceptance of illiberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially illiberal or even authoritarian traits', according to Marina Ottaway. Hence, there seems to be a paradox in that, although there has been a significant rise in formal democracy, clear challenges remain in consolidating and substantiating democratic institutions and practice beyond the mere holding of elections.

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Historically, a strong correlation between (high levels of) wealth and (an established level of) democracy has been observed, thereby triggering a debate on whether democracy is a prerequisite for economic development or vice versa.

One fiercely debated example is China. The economic rise of this country over the last decade has generated an ongoing debate as to whether democracy is necessary to foster economic development, or whether authoritarian systems are better suited to the task, especially in developing countries that need to play catch-up.

For every study providing evidence for one argument, evidence can also be harnessed to support the opposite claim. NIMD believes it is important to recognize that economic growth alone, though essential, is by no means enough to improve overall human development. Human development only takes place when economic surplus is used to benefit the whole of society. Citizens need to be able to exercise their citizenship by contributing to and participating in resolving the problems that affect their lives. Democratic, accountable, and legitimate state institutions, including political parties, are widely recognized as essential prerequisites in ensuring this process.

CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING DEMOCRACIES

While there is considerable variation among developing democracies, many of them share some key characteristics regarding political and societal challenges:

CENTRALIZED POWER AND 'PRESIDENTIALISM'

In developing democracies, power tends to be intensely centralized, regardless of constitutional provisions. The figure of the president often lies above the law, controls state resources without accountability, and delegates remarkably little authority. This limits the development of strong institutions and facilitates government employment and expenditures based on personal networks rather than merit and cost efficiency. Moreover, centralized power limits constructive and comprehensive oversight, as few mechanisms exist to keep a dominant executive under surveillance.

LOW LEVELS OF TRUST IN FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

Many formal democratic institutions suffer from a lack of credibility and trust. National legislatures

and political parties have consistently polled as the least trusted public institutions, ranking well below religious institutions and the armed forces. This is particularly troubling given that political parties have a crucial role in nurturing and sustaining democratic governance. Parties themselves can often be blamed for the lack of trust, but it is also the negative perception of the wider political arena that causes distrust.

UNCLEAR AND/OR UNFIT RULES OF THE GAME

In developing democracies, the rules of the game are contested, with formal and informal institutions overlapping and a high degree of informality in politics. There are often inconsistencies between a country's current local context and its formal constitutional and governance arrangements, which often stem from colonial times. For instance, the formal system often does not cater to equal representation of different ethnicities, a nation's geopolitical relevance, or a particular historical set-up or culture. Due to the mostly informal nature of patronage networks and clan- or ethnic-based groupings, formal institutions cannot secure compliance and independent functioning, so informal practices persist and often take precedence in the way politics manifests itself.

CORRUPTION, PATRONAGE, AND CLIENTELISM

Political regimes in developing democracies are often driven by direct and personal interests, so political actors often act to further their own gains without much concern for the public good. Consequently, high levels of clientelism and corruption are persistent within these regimes, especially when citizens have few means to hold elites accountable. Despite being the basis of democracy, elections can also be a source of corruption; since campaigning is expensive, politicians often raise funds or win votes in illicit ways. Clientelism has been associated with increased popular cynicism about how democracies function. This is important because it can have a detrimental effect on how people perceive democracies and their overall democratic values and behaviour.

EXCLUSION MECHANISMS AND MASCULINE POLITICS

Often, both the formal and informal political system and culture exclude underrepresented groups, most clearly women. Overall, political culture in these emerging democracies is very

masculine, male-dominated, and exclusionary towards women and younger generations. Participating in the political system is generally reserved for elites, as it often requires considerable financial resources. In relation to this, the rule of law, which is meant to establish formal rules and regulations to properly shape political interactions and make politics more transparent and predictable, is weak. Therefore, the basic equality of all citizens before the law cannot be guaranteed, again exacerbating the low levels of trust in the political system.

WEAK POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

In addition to exclusion mechanisms and closed dominant political cultures, nascent democratic regimes tend to lack broad public participation, leaving large chunks of society, including women, youth, indigenous populations or inhabitants of certain regions, and the impoverished, out of politics. Even groups that are minimally represented often do not participate actively due to a lack of means and access mechanisms. This shallow political participation and weak governmental accountability leads to a sense of collective public frustration about what democracy can deliver and what can be achieved through formal political institutions.

HIGH TENSION AND LACK OF DIALOGUE

Many developing democracies experience high levels of polarization and open tension between parties and politicians as the fight for power and control over state resources is still perceived as a zero-sum game. There is little space for open dialogue and no common acknowledgement of parties' shared responsibilities towards society. Negotiations often take place on the basis of the interests of individual politicians rather than in pursuit of common public interests, and distrust is often based on images of 'the other' rather than on experience.

NIMD works with political parties to help developing democracies to reduce and overcome these challenges. Chapter 2 explains our focus on this specific niche.

2 RATIONALE FOR WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties are the primary institutions that link the state to society. They are instrumental in democratic transitions and the process of democratic consolidation. NIMD believes that political parties have, for a long time, been the missing link in international development efforts.

Although political parties around the world come in different forms and sizes, they have common features that distinguish them from other civil organizations or state institutions. One of these key features is the willingness to take responsibility for governing a state and to participate in elections. Many organizations seek influence over public affairs, but political parties are unique in wanting to further their ideas and interest by participating in elections in order to utilize the power of the state. In principle, parties fulfil many core functions in linking state and society:

- Collect, aggregate, and represent citizen interests
- Act as a mechanism for mediating the interests of different groups
- Formulate and propose viable policy agendas and frame political choices for citizens
- Educate citizens about political issues
- Recruit, train, socialize, and screen potential leaders
- Form governments and take responsibility for governance

Box 2: political party functions, (Wild et al. 2011, Burnell 2004, Carothers 2006)

It is important to note, however, that hardly any party, including in the industrialized world, fulfils all of the functions that are described in this idealized model. Therefore, this list should not be understood as a checklist of requirements, but rather as a guide to the essential functions that are carried out by political parties in healthy democracies.

CHALLENGES POLITICAL PARTIES FACE

The majority of parties in the countries where NIMD works face severe challenges that hinder their performance.

Political parties suffer from bad reputations in many countries around the world. They are often perceived as dishonest, self-interested organizations since they are used and manipulated by elites struggling for power and access to state resources, and are therefore primarily preoccupied with winning elections.

In many cases, political parties in our programme countries are not sufficiently transparent and they lack grassroots support from broad constituencies. Their political agendas rarely respond to popularly determined national issues. Parties seldom present broad policy strategies nor court public opinion, but instead serve personal interests. As a result, political parties rarely enact or propose effective policies or represent true public interests. This is also due to the mostly informal nature of politics, where patronage networks and ethnic-based groupings are the primary concern. This means corruption is endemic at every level of government and governance.

The prevalence of corruption throughout state institutions is also a primary cause for deep public distrust in political parties. In fact, political parties tend to be one of the least trusted institutions in the eyes of the population and they are considered the weakest link in the democratic governance chain. Moreover, in most countries where NIMD works, there are high levels of polarization and tension between parties and politicians. This is especially the case in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Settings (FCAS), where there is little space for open dialogue and no common acknowledgement of parties' shared responsibilities to society.

Another common trait shared by political parties around the world is the weak link that exists between them and their elected officials. Consequently, there is little coherence within party policy and programmes, which means that oversight of government by parliament is often only being taken on by some committed individuals rather than parliamentary groups. This creates limited horizontal accountability, namely the checks and balances between democratic institutions, and rubber stamping parliaments.

The fact that public financing of political parties often does not exist or function properly makes the long-term sustainability of parties a challenge. Proper public financing of political parties across the developing world remains rare and with low levels of trust in, and performance of, parties, public opinion is often not in favour of its introduction. This may strengthen the relationship between legitimate and illegitimate economic and political elites even further, as only they can afford to maintain parties and are, therefore, able to dominate the party system.

This weak institutionalization and lack of internal democracy also limits options for talented newcomers to be identified and given opportunities to grow within a party. Internally, parties often function based on personal

connections and individual financial resources, thereby facilitating elite domination of the party's structure and agenda. This also prevents talented newcomers from joining parties or pursuing a political career based on merit and only exacerbates the continuous underrepresentation of women, youth, and indigenous people, especially if they are poor and cannot afford to obtain an elective position.

SUPPORTING POLITICAL PARTIES

The international development community has, in general, been rather hesitant to work directly with parties in order to strengthen democratic governance. Aside from a few key players in the field, support for political parties has remained a rather small area of donor engagement. Indeed, several analysts have observed that political parties have long been the 'weakest link' in achieving development and governance objectives. This is largely because working with parties is considered highly sensitive.

Political party assistance is also typically considered to be ineffective, mainly because it has remained highly prescriptive and based on idealized Western conceptions of what political parties ought to look like, rather than on an understanding of how they function in local contexts. This tendency among donors to be prescriptive has led many of the intended beneficiaries of political party assistance to feel little ownership of the process.

NIMD takes up the challenge of strengthening the democratic role of political parties and has, over the years, developed a unique approach in this regard. NIMD works with all parties across the political spectrum – ruling and opposition parties together – to build trust and confidence and to ensure that fair and equally accessible democratic systems are put in place to guarantee that politicians observe democratic values and compete respectfully on their programmatic policies and positions. As an organization with roots in Dutch politics – with the seven founding parties representing the range of the political spectrum – NIMD espouses the very notion of multiparty democracy in its DNA.

The NIMD approach also significantly distinguishes itself from other democracy support providers not in terms of the formulated end goals, but in how it provides support to these objectives. Rather than ad hoc short-term bilateral support, NIMD is geared towards long-term equal partnerships with all key political parties. By engaging parties in a process of dialogue, combined with a strengthening of party organizations on specific capacities and an overall fostering of democratic capital, NIMD has a holistic approach within the niche and has, over the years, invested in highly qualified staff to support and implement NIMD programmes.

NIMD'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Engrained in the NIMD approach are clear guiding principles. These principles relate to the process of working with political parties, especially under sensitive circumstances. At the same time, they guard the organization's identity and are used to manage risks. They are based on practical experience in operating sensitive political programmes over the last decade. The guiding principles are:



Figure 1: NIMD's Guiding Principles

As described in this chapter, NIMD's work focuses on strengthening political parties. The next chapter looks at NIMD's goals and specific objectives when it comes to supporting the political sector.

3 DEFINING THE CHANGE

NIMD'S OVERALL GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

NIMD was founded to support developing democracies and to strengthen their political processes by supporting political parties as key actors. Political parties are the link between the people and the state. They play an essential role in shaping the formal system and in embodying democratic principles such as inclusion, participation and representation.

Based on this premise, NIMD's vision, or overall goal, is to promote robust and 'deep' multiparty democracies that go beyond the surface, represent all voices in society, harness peace and security, internalize respect for human rights and the rule of law, and work towards sustainable inclusive growth and development for all citizens. To achieve this goal, NIMD assists political parties in developing democracies. We feel that this is where we can make a difference:

GOAL NIMD:
**INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT DEMOCRACIES
THROUGH STRONGER POLITICAL PARTIES**

THREE LEVELS OF CHANGE

Changes at three interrelated levels – political system, actor and culture – need to be addressed in order to achieve NIMD's goal of inclusive and transparent democracies:

POLITICAL SYSTEM LEVEL: THE OFFICIAL RULES OF THE GAME

In most developing democracies where NIMD works, the formal political system is not conducive for substantial democratic practice. Formal rules, regulations, systems, and even constitutions are often skewed towards the elite and there is no level playing field for other political actors to

participate. Official rules do not uphold democratic principles such as inclusive representation, the organization of free, fair, and frequent elections, transparent procedures, and accountability on political decisions. In order to have an inclusive and transparent democracy, the formal rules and regulations should ensure a level playing field between all political actors.

POLITICAL ACTOR LEVEL: THE CAPACITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICIANS

There are three main drivers for political parties: a power-seeking driver (being in government and exercising power), a vote-seeking driver (organizing campaigns and winning votes in order to obtain power in elections), and a policy-seeking driver (presenting the party's ideas and interests from its backers and from society and implementing these policies). While the first two drivers are often present in parties in developing democracies, the third driver – policy-seeking – is often not a priority. Parties usually have few structures and systems in place to actively seek voter interests and to aggregate these into meaningful manifestos and election programmes, nor to present alternative policies reflecting a realistic assessment and clear party vision.

Furthermore, internal party democracy is often weakly institutionalized, as shown, for instance, by a lack of procedures for electing party officials and incentive structures not being geared towards more policy orientation. Subsequently, parties and their politicians seek power mainly to gain control over state resources that can be used for private interests. Often, the party is then just a vehicle to get a certain politician elected and is fully dependent on his (indeed, the politician is most often a man) support and deep pockets. Therefore, in order to arrive at inclusive and transparent democracies, parties need to have the capacity to, and indeed operate, according to their democratic roles.

POLITICAL CULTURE LEVEL: THE BEHAVIOUR IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

All too often, when talking about democratization, the challenges are identified around free and fair elections and the basic capacity of democratic institutions like parliament, political parties, and

the judiciary. However, by only focusing on these formal arrangements (system) and capacities (actor), it may seem that once these institutions are in place and functional, then democracy will be achieved. This leaves out the essential element of political culture that needs to be nurtured in order for democracy to take root.

The culture level refers to underlying power dynamics, values, and expectations that govern and shape the formal political system. It refers to the ability of all main political players (both elite and the mass public), political parties, and civil society groups to accept democracy as 'the only game in town'. In other words, the democratic process needs to be seen as the only legitimate means to gain power and to process public demands, and losers need to accept such outcomes and yet remain committed to the overarching framework of pre-established democratic rules.

Culture, in this sense, is an agreement regarding behaviour and norms, which political elites and citizens alike underwrite. In most developing democracies, these unwritten rules, such as moral codes, social norms, taboos, and (gender) stereotypes, not only facilitate incentives and the status quo for the (male) political elite, but also restrain others from accessing or influencing political power mechanisms. There are also high levels of distrust between political actors within a culture of winner-takes-all political competition, and in general, political culture is not conducive to the participation of underrepresented groups, especially women.

These three levels set out the basic change framework for NIMD programmes. The specific interventions for change will, however, always be determined by the specific context analysis of a country, whereby each level of change is used as a 'lens' to shape the particular programme.

The next chapter will look in more detail at the strategies and instruments we use on programme level.

4 THE NIMD APPROACH: OUR STRATEGIES AND INSTRUMENTS

In this chapter we will consider the objectives, strategies, and instruments for each level of change. The strategies and instruments explain how NIMD achieves its objectives.

When discussing the objectives, the change needed, intervention logic, and causal pathway will also be presented. Furthermore, each level ends with a visual representation called 'pathway of change'. This visual presents the causal intentions and underlying assumptions of the strategy described. It outlines the different effects that the strategy can have on all three level objectives as well as the overall objective. The reason for including all the levels and all the objectives in the pathways is that these pathways of change do not represent a neat linear process, but are more of an open exercise. In practice, changes will occur on all three levels, but not necessary simultaneously, nor in an upward direction, but it will often take the form of 'three steps forward, two steps back'.

	Goal	Strategy	Instrument
System level change	Enabling environment for political parties	Facilitating interparty dialogue	Setting up and managing interparty dialogue platforms
Actor level change	xx xx xx		
Culture level change	xx xx xx		

Box 3: Overview of NIMD's strategies and instruments

SYSTEM LEVEL CHANGE

OBJECTIVE: AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES

For the system level, the change needed relates to creating political environments with transparent and inclusive rules of engagement that foster diversity and create a level political playing field for both political parties and other groups in society. This level mainly relates to the official rules that define the operating space and shape the formal framework in which parties operate, including, for instance, a nation's constitution, a country's governance set-up, its electoral system, political party financing, quota regulations, and access to media.

CHANGE NEEDED:

From closed and exclusionary political systems, to open (with equitable access for all actors) and enabling political environments that foster diversity and facilitate political parties to take up their roles in society.

INTERVENTION LOGIC:

When political actors have better relations and improved mutual trust, then a process can be started to jointly analyze deficits of the system and to develop the outline and basic requirements for rules and regulations of the system. By subsequently facilitating the joint development (drafting, testing, agreement, and adoption) of these improvements of the system in the form of new legislation, code of conducts, or rules and procedures, the formal democratic space will be enlarged and the political environment will enable parties to play their democratic roles.

CAUSAL PATHWAY

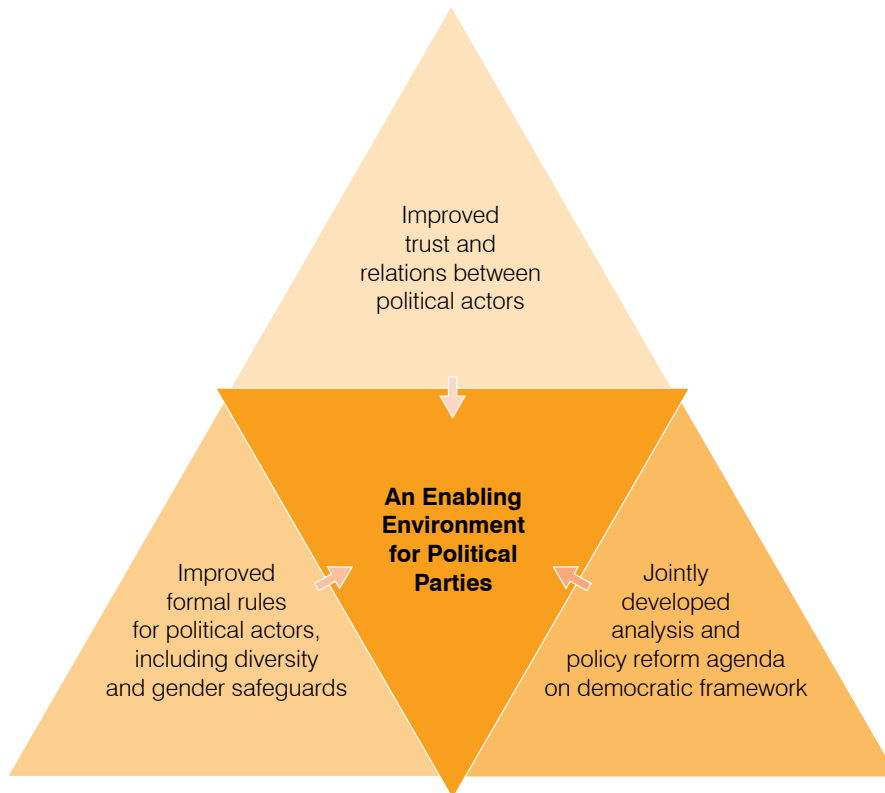


Figure 2: Preconditions for system level objective

If:

- Trust and relations are improved between political actors; and
- A joint reform agenda for improvement of the democratic framework is set and agreed; and
- Formal rules and regulations governing political actors are improved; and
- These rules and regulations promote diversity and include gender-just provisions



Then:

- An enabling environment for political actors is created

Because

(assumptions):

- Collaboration to improve rules and regulations will take place when socialization and dialogue takes place amongst political actors
- A jointly developed analysis and reform agenda will guide development and agreement of final texts
- Improvement of rules and regulations creates an enlargement of the formal democratic space.

NIMD STRATEGY FOR SYSTEM LEVEL CHANGE: FACILITATING INTERPARTY DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

Open access to the political arena and fair rules of the political game are of paramount importance for a functioning democracy. This may require changes in the political system's design and its functioning, both formally and informally. The key strategy and method that NIMD has developed to facilitate this are interparty dialogue and less formalized cooperation mechanisms.

Generally, dialogue is defined as a process that involves different individuals or groups openly and genuinely sharing experiences or viewpoints. It is distinct from negotiation, debate, or discussion in that dialogue does not aim to reach conclusions. Participants agree primarily to share and learn as opposed to convince, persuade, or achieve material goals. Dialogue complements and builds towards other forms of engagement, but it remains distinct from them.

A constructive dialogue between political peers is especially important in polarized or adversary environments where political deadlock needs to be overcome. It is important that all relevant political parties embrace democracy and acknowledge it as the 'only game in town', but also with a level playing field so that each party has equitable and open access to information, resources, and the system as a whole.

NIMD utilizes the opportunities dialogue offers in a political party setting. We identify the following three goals for dialogue:

1. Dialogue as a way to build trust between adversaries and actors, to create empathy for others, and to foster a mutual recognition of the humanity amongst different or conflicting groups.
2. Dialogue as a means to create consensus, particularly around issues such as democratic reforms.
3. Dialogue as a safe space in which parties can talk openly and genuinely about experiences and opinions on major issues. The dialogue then becomes a political space for the exploration and discussion of democratic deficit issues, issues of national concern, and other issues of interest to political parties.

These processes are inherently linked, with interactions and open sharing of views about issues leading to greater trust and empathy, particularly with repeated interactions. It is this 'technique' that makes interparty dialogue a key strategy in aiming for changes on the formal, but also informal, political systems level.

Interparty dialogue also fosters a democratic political culture that requires people to have a radius of trust that extends beyond the immediate sphere of solidarity – the family. This allows people to build forms of solidarity that are conducive to cooperation on public matters that lie beyond immediate self-interest.

MAIN INSTRUMENT FOR SYSTEM LEVEL CHANGE: SETTING UP AND MANAGING INTERPARTY DIALOGUE PLATFORMS

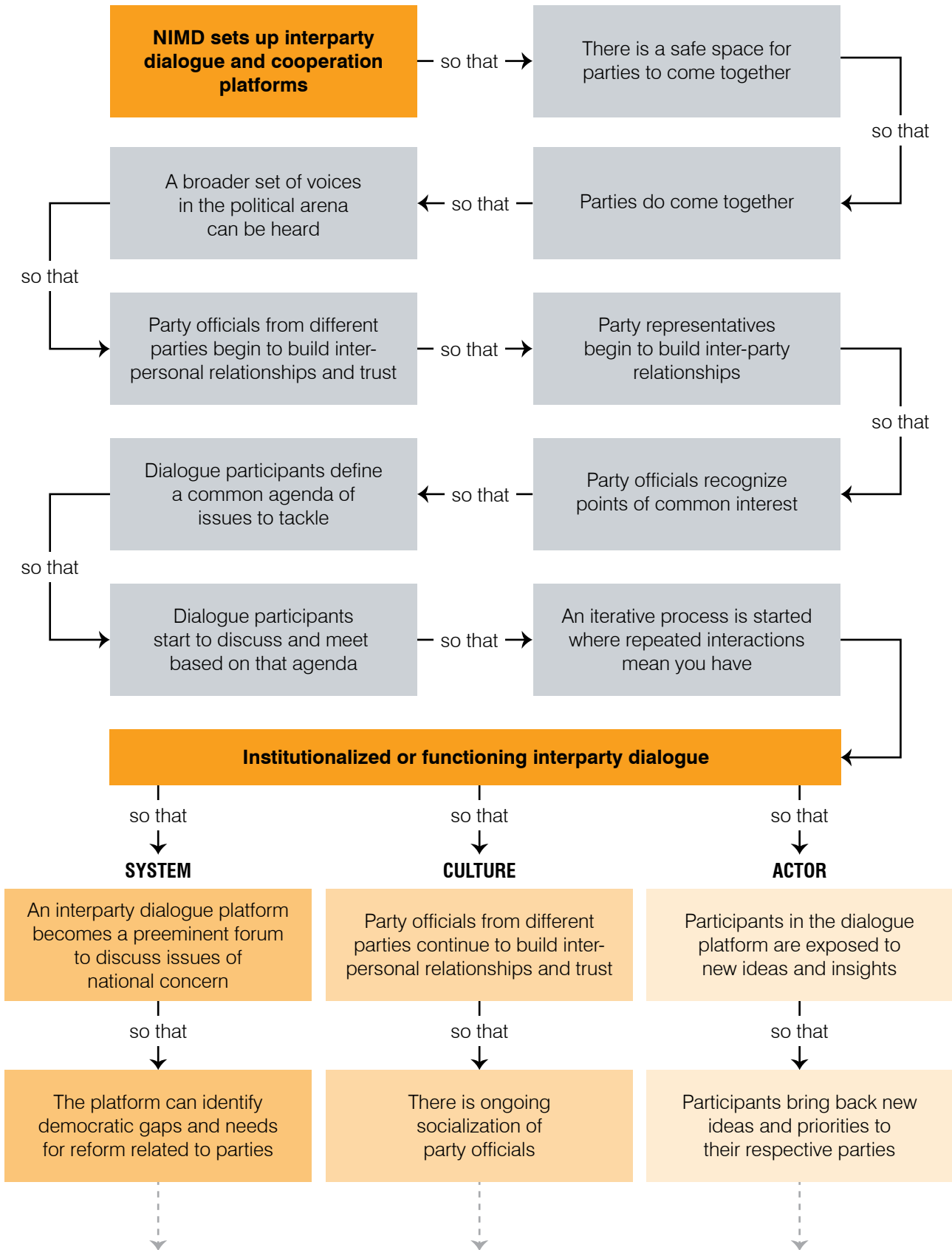
In pursuing the interparty dialogue and cooperation strategy, NIMD focuses both on [facilitating a political dialogue](#) (the process) and on building or strengthening the support structures that are essential in order to underpin and consolidate or institutionalize this dialogue (the platform). NIMD invests in establishing physical safe spaces for parties to regularly meet and simultaneously support a secretariat to host and organize the meetings, and the follow-up of agreed points for collaboration or reform, while buttressing this process with support activities.

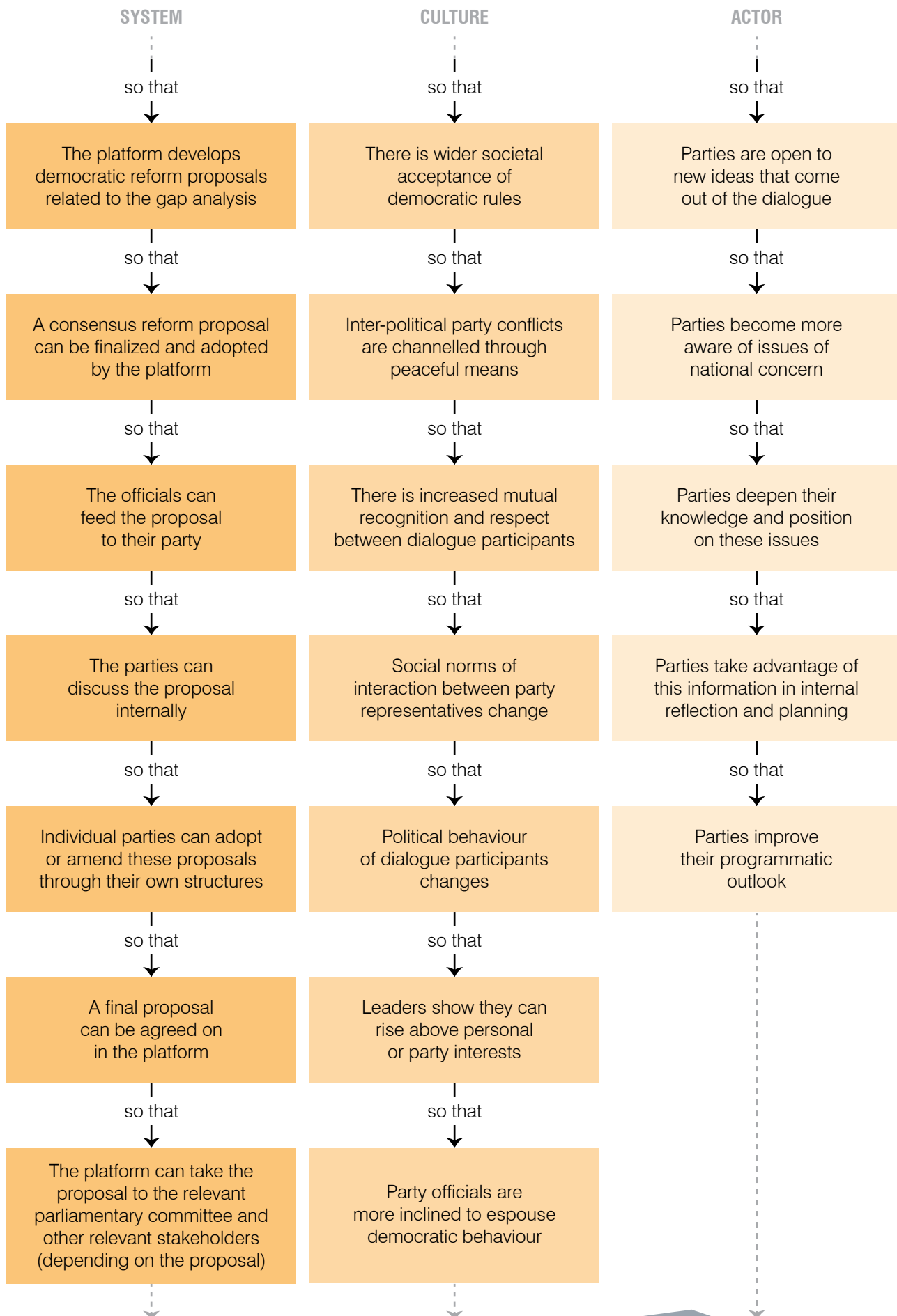
These platforms are the physical safe spaces for political parties to meet and interact, foster relationships, recognize each other's right of existence, and see each other as political competitors, not enemies. Participants acquire information and learn about political systems in other similar settings, where they discuss issues of national interest, build up interpersonal and interparty levels of trust, and, where possible, overcome barriers between the parties. Participants also formulate, agree on, and pursue a political reform agenda, and foster an open political culture that hinges around a freely accessible, transparent, and issue-based debate.

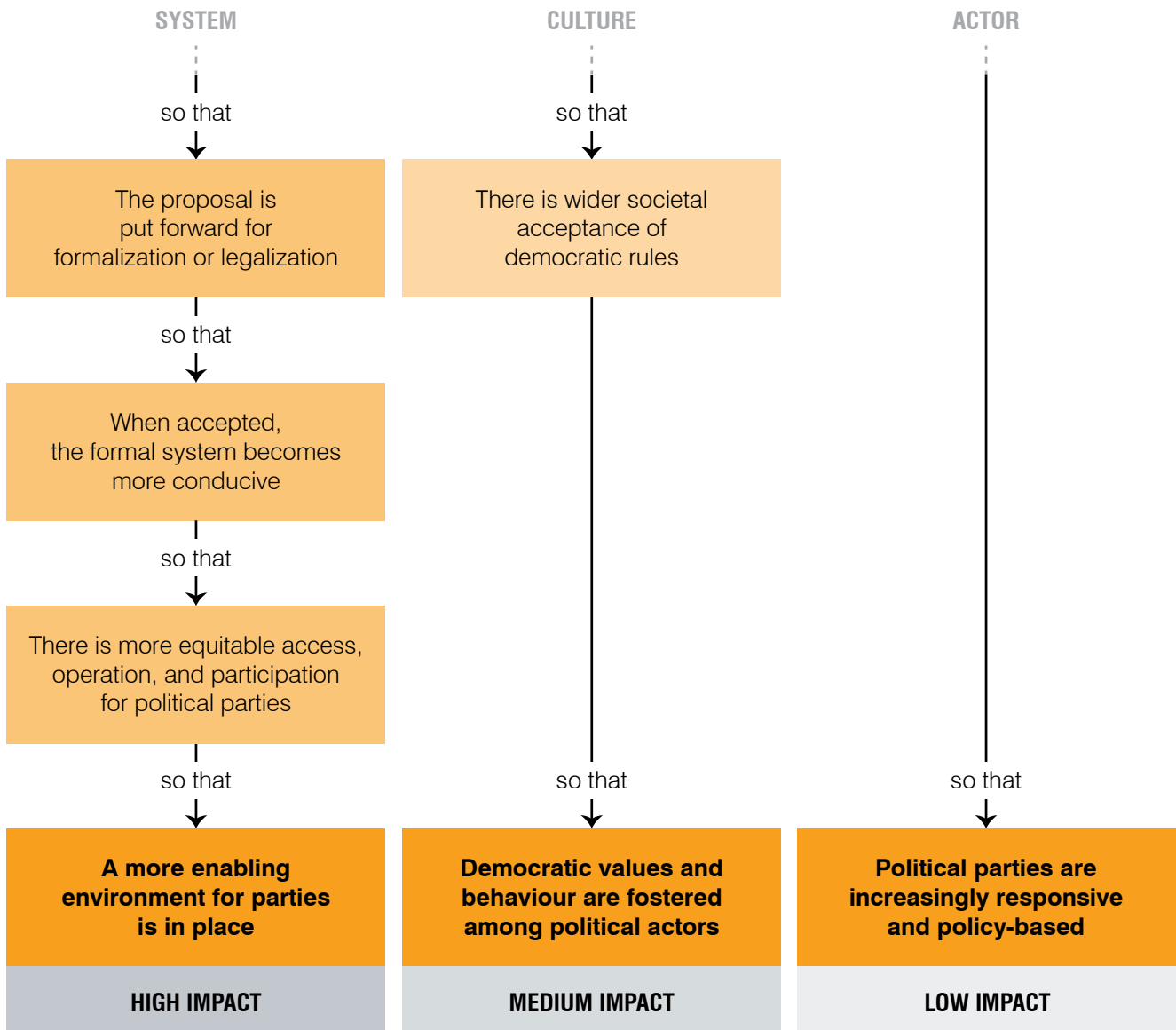
This is not an easy process. There are challenges related to both the setting up of the physical platform and the facilitation of the process towards sustainable outcomes. It is often two steps forward, one step back, or the other way around. This process often clashes with existing polarized relations and predatory practices between local politicians and political parties. Balancing the attention between the institutionalization processes of these forums, whilst at the same time ensuring a credible political reform agenda, has proven to be demanding but essential for success.

Once foundations for trust have been established, parties participating in the dialogue are urged to jointly identify systematic gaps in a political system and to set, negotiate, and adopt a national agenda for political reform to contribute and shape a level political playing field in which all political parties can participate as equals. The long-term goal is to allow political parties to move from very limited one-off acts of cooperation, which require relatively little trust, to continuous cooperation that requires more trust. In the same vein, dialogue processes are initially focused on discussing democratic reforms or proposals related to the role of parties (legislations, financing, campaigning, etc.) or constitutional reform processes. Once this dialogue process has become more institutionalized, the focus will also shift to national development issues.

PATHWAY OF CHANGE: USING DIALOGUE PLATFORMS TO ACHIEVE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES







SO THAT THROUGH AN ITERATIVE PROCESS,
 NIMD CONTRIBUTES TO THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF:
INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT DEMOCRACIES

ACTOR LEVEL

OBJECTIVE: RESPONSIVE AND POLICY-BASED POLITICAL PARTIES

The actor level change primarily concerns building capacities within political parties to allow them to better function in their primary role of interest aggregation and articulation. Political parties need to be internally coherent and speak with a unified voice grounded on a policy platform. In order to achieve this, there needs to be a strong link between the party and its constituents, as well as a rules-based and democratic internal party organization. A responsive and policy-based party is also likely to survive different leaders. This will foster:

- Greater representation of the voices of citizens due to less personality-based party structures and parties broadening their bases beyond narrow sectional interests to become more inclusive
- Greater success in development and poverty reduction as parties become more engaged in the policy process and are less motivated to abuse or divert state resources for clientelistic purposes
- Greater democratic legitimacy that can improve both democratic consolidation and economic performance as decision making becomes more transparent and rules-based

In NIMD's experience, ruling parties are more willing to cooperate with opposition parties who act programmatically and have a clear position, as this allows them to cooperate more and reduce conflict. This also directly links to the system level precondition of building trust.

CHANGE NEEDED:

From parties that are weakly organized, have little analytical capacity, and mainly act on personality-driven decision making, to parties that are well-structured, internally coherent and accountable, and that formulate viable policies, consult and respond to their support base, and compete politically on the basis of these policies or programmes.

INTERVENTION LOGIC:

Political parties do not perform their mandated roles in society due to both lack of capacity and internal cohesion, as well as a lack of political will and incentives. The latter issue will be addressed in the next section when discussing the culture level, while the former issue will be dealt with in this section. When parties are supported with new or improved consultation mechanisms, they can better take into account the needs and interests of citizens. When parties have more capacity to analyse development issues, they can create more inclusive policies and decisions for socio-economic development and position themselves on this basis. Responsive and policy-based parties contribute to domestic accountability by being held accountable on policies and by better controlling government.

CAUSAL PATHWAY

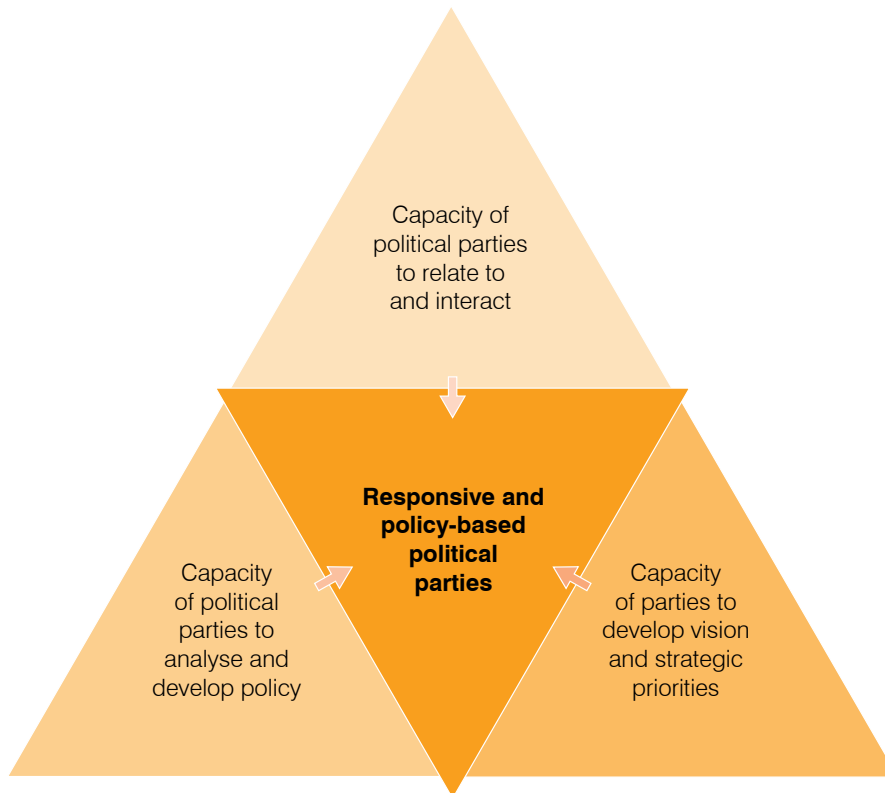


Figure 3: Preconditions for actor level objective

If:

- Capacity of political parties to develop a common vision and strategic priorities is improved; and
- Capacity of political parties to analyse and develop policy with input from civil society is improved; and
- Capacity of political parties to relate to and interact with the electorate and their constituencies is improved



Then:

- Political parties are able to be responsive and policy-based and play their role in domestic accountability

Because

(assumptions):

- A clear party identity contributes to issue-based politics
- Improved analysis capacity facilitates policy development
- Political parties have a (basic) structure to absorb capacity development and have a functional support base to consult with.

STRATEGY FOR ACTOR LEVEL CHANGE: STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND BUILDING PARTY CAPACITY ON POLITICAL PROGRAMMING

Parties in democratizing countries have few structures and systems in place to actively seek voter interest and aggregate this into meaningful manifestos and election programmes, or present alternative policies reflecting a realistic assessment and clear party vision. Internal party democracy is often weakly institutionalized, as shown, for instance, by a lack of procedures for electing party officials.

Therefore, the main aim of the strategy to [build capacity on political programming](#) is to develop political policies and programmes that actually aggregate and articulate the needs and interests of the constituencies of the parties. This way, they can effectively formulate coherent and viable policy alternatives and frame political choices for citizens, which allows parties to play their intended role as interlocutor between citizens and the state. Support, in this regard, can be provided both bilaterally or in a cross-party setting and includes, for instance, thematic capacity building on issues most relevant for a country, such as electoral reform, education, health care, security, regional integration, or fiscal reform.

The capacity building activities also aim to create awareness within the political parties of what is feasible within a given budget, so that they can develop their own realistic political proposals. In addition, NIMD assists parties in assessing and reforming the formal and informal barriers that impede the participation, representation, and leadership of marginalized and minority groups in policy processes.

NIMD provides support to parties during the full electoral cycle in the programme country. In the first half of the electoral cycle, concrete activities include strategic planning; programme development; policy analysis; policy formulation and organizational capacity; internal democracy strengthening and democracy education for political leaders, representatives, and party members to practice dialogue and programmatic debate. These trainings, which come in different shapes, forms, and durations, serve a dual purpose. First, they strengthen the parties' professional and leadership skills. Second, they allow politicians to meaningfully participate in the interparty dialogue and to articulate clear political party positions. In the second half of the electoral cycle, concrete activities include formulation of campaign programmes, articulation of campaign messages, issue-based multiparty debates on radio and television, constituency consultation, communication and candidate training, and so on. These are geared towards enabling the electorate to get to know their parties and their positions in order to make an informed political choice.

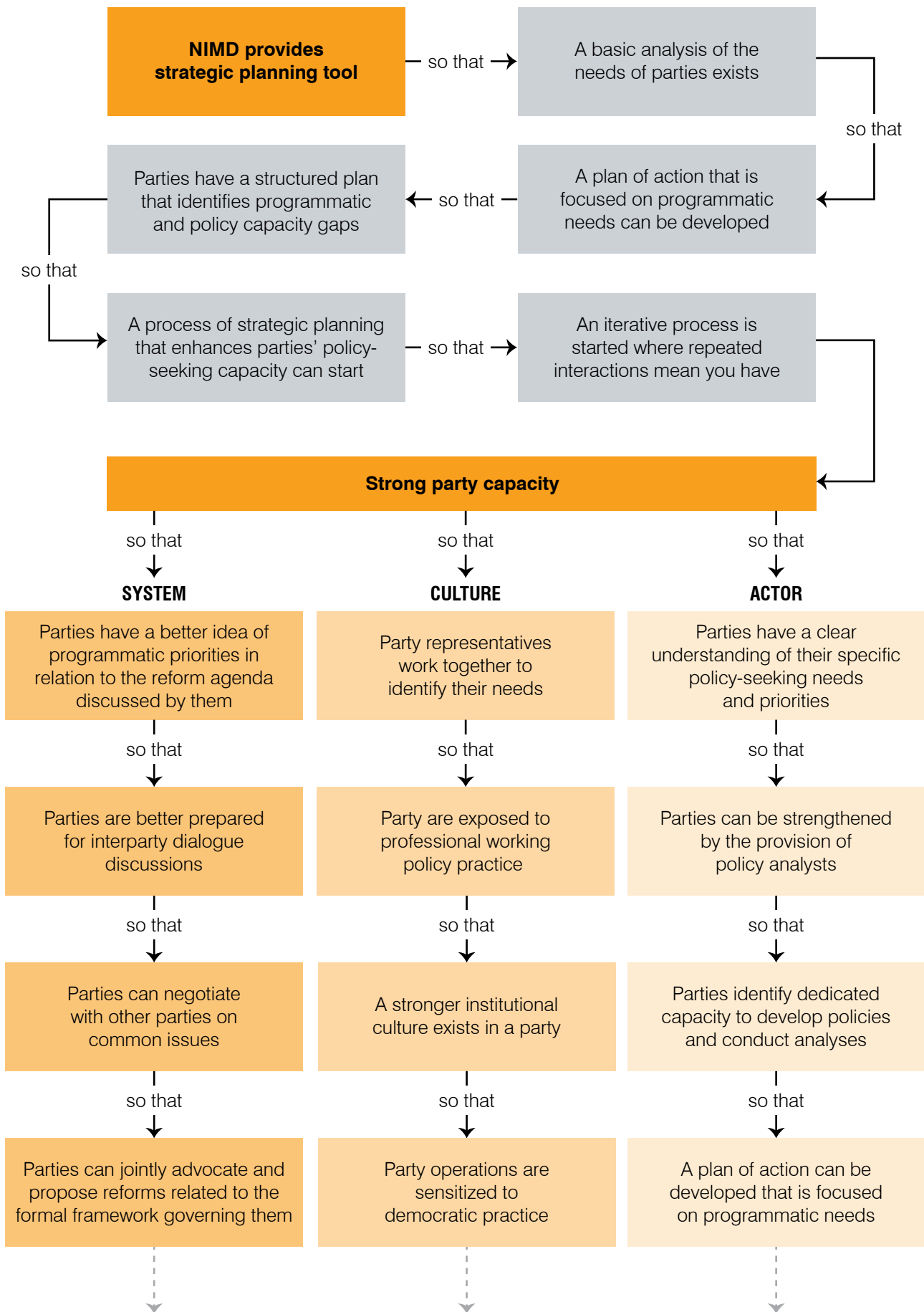
MAIN INSTRUMENT FOR ACTOR LEVEL CHANGE: STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL

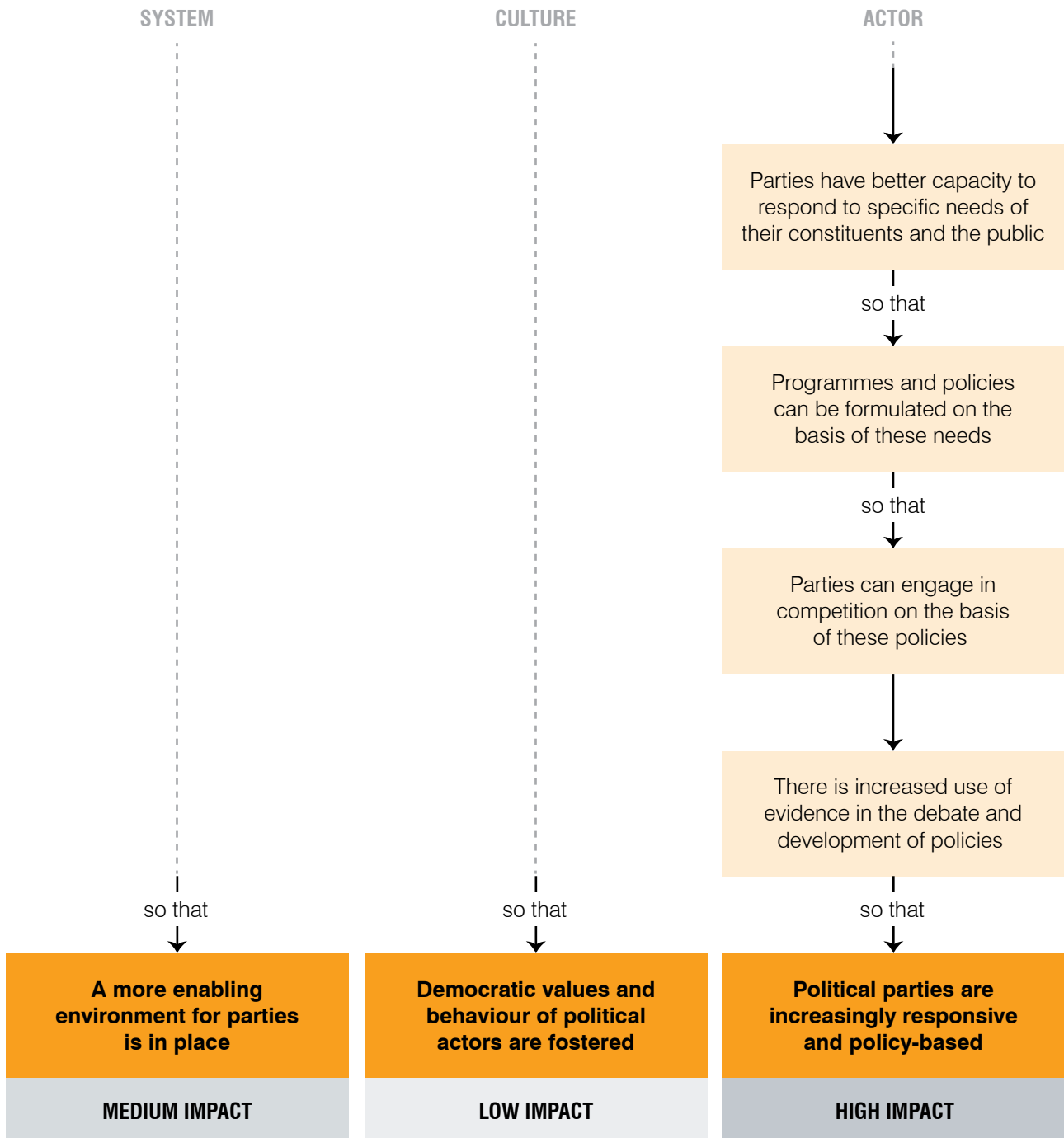
The strategy for building party capacity encompasses several instruments and activities, the implementation

of which depends on the specific needs and context of the country and its parties. Activities include training and tools on programme and manifesto development, policy formulation and analysis assistance, provision of policy analysts, training of policy officers within parties, linkages with civil society organizations, articulation of distinctive party messages, regular issue-based multiparty debates on radio and television, and constituency consultations.

[The Strategic Planning Tool](#), which was jointly developed by NIMD and International IDEA focuses on establishing specific strategic needs within a party based on a SWOT analysis. The product that comes out of the tool, the strategic action plan, forms the basis of tailored needs based support that can be offered. The specific pathway for this tool is detailed in the pathway of change below.

PATHWAY OF CHANGE: STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL





SO THAT THROUGH AN ITERATIVE PROCESS,
NIMD CONTRIBUTES TO THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF:
INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT DEMOCRACIES

CULTURE LEVEL

OBJECTIVE: ENHANCED DEMOCRATIC VALUES OF POLITICAL ACTORS

One of the key principles of democracy is that the legitimacy of power to make decisions about the future of people's lives derives from the voice and influence of those whose lives it affects. Functioning democracies depend on accountable leaders who not only represent the interests of the electorate and articulate their needs and aspirations into action (policy), but who also actively shape a political culture in which no groups are excluded and where a diversity of voices and opinion is heard and accommodated. At the national level, political culture is a reflection of the collective behaviour of political society. It is specifically a reflection of the interactions amongst and between political actors and the rest of the population.

Interpersonal trust is seen as essential for building the social structures on which democracy depends. A democratic political culture thus requires people to have a radius of trust that extends beyond the immediate sphere of solidarity – the family – so that they can achieve forms of solidarity that are conducive to cooperation on public matters that lie beyond immediate self-interest. This links, for instance, to the importance of taking minority voices into account in decision-making, and to the idea that political opponents should see each other not as enemies, but should instead behave in a manner that is open to compromise rather than blocking cooperation from the beginning. It also relates to specific individual incentives, such as money, power, and clan or ethnic allegiances, which block political party functioning and the deepening of democracy. Change is most often needed in the attitudes and behaviour of political actors, so that they refrain from antagonistic politics, accommodate views and proposals from political opponents, and support inclusive development that benefits the common good.

Although a particular political culture is hard to pin down or determine specifically, let alone change, NIMD feels that it is nevertheless instrumental to work on this aspect of democracy. (Senior) political party leadership and civil society leaders form the core target audience for NIMD's work. Although difficult and often neglected in development efforts, it is essential to work with these political elites. Research does indicate that when elite behaviour changes, it reflects on the expectations, interactions, and outlook of broader society. If political elites are willing to compromise and form grand coalitions, they can overcome past experiences of severe instability, social polarization, and trauma. Of course, this is bound to be a long-term and complex process, but at least there is also academic recognition that 'culture', be it a democratic political culture or otherwise, is not static, but can be dynamic and change over time.

CHANGE NEEDED:

From personalized, predatory, and antagonistic behaviour characterized by nepotism, corruption, and conflict, to open political interaction characterized by a willingness to accommodate others' views, a respect for the rules of the democratic and political 'game', and political performance (competition and cooperation) that focuses on the common good.

INTERVENTION LOGIC:

When political leaders and elites are exposed to different settings, social norms, knowledge and mindsets, their basic ideas and assumptions on political practice can be challenged. When more democratic social norms are fostered, individual behaviour and acceptance of the new norms changes. When (future) leaders are educated and practice democratic skills, they will use these skills in political positions. By integrating this with the other objectives, change can be achieved.

CAUSAL PATHWAY

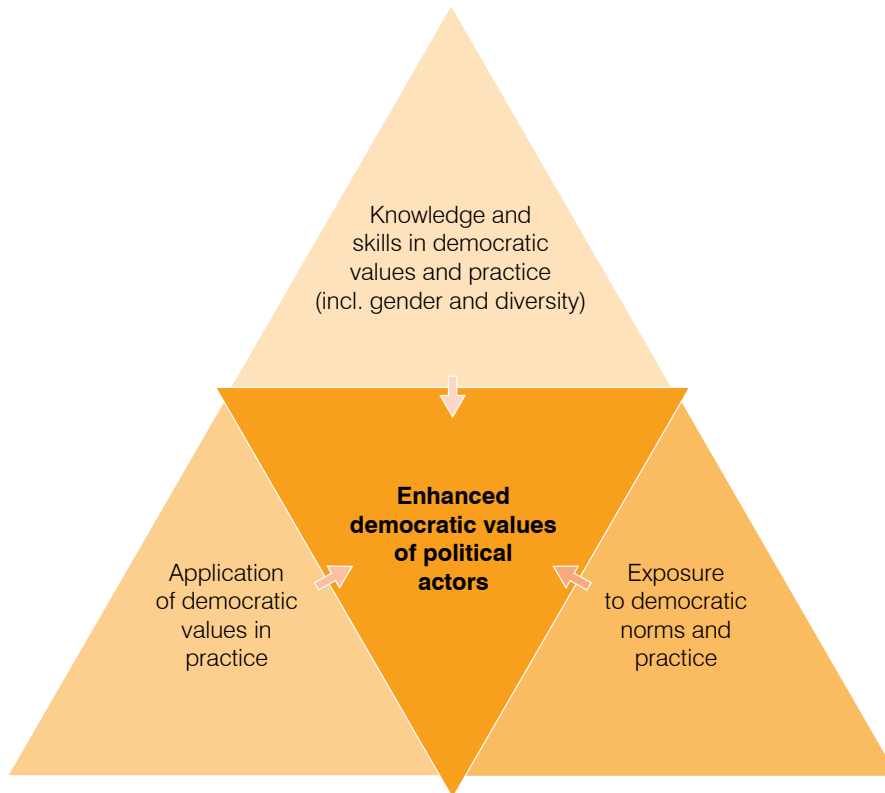


Figure 4: Preconditions for culture level objective

If:

- Political and civic leaders have enhanced knowledge and skills in democratic practice, gender-just policies and inclusive processes; and
- Political actors are exposed to democratic norms and practice, including respect for minority views and rights; and
- Application of democratic practice and values and norms is facilitated in practice

Then:

- Democratic actors have enhanced democratic values that contributes to a culture of accommodation and consultation

Because

(assumptions):

- Knowledge gaps and deficits in democratic behaviour, and political skills in political practitioners or aspirants impact positively on said behaviour
- Exposing democratic actors to different norms and contexts can change individual behaviour
- Improved trust and interaction between leaders, along with improved capacities within parties, facilitates the application of democratic behaviour and practice

STRATEGY FOR CULTURE LEVEL CHANGE: FOSTERING DEMOCRATIC CAPITAL AND BEHAVIOUR

A consolidated democracy cannot function without democrats. Therefore, a large part of the NIMD approach is geared towards strengthening democratic values and behaviour among political actors, thus allowing for a culture of mutual acceptance and respect. This culture lays the foundation for accommodative politics and a culture of cooperation and compromise. These elements are, at the same time, essential ingredients in an effective interparty dialogue process and in shaping and negotiating a national agenda for policy and political change. This includes a renewed focus on competition for power in a non-violent way, reaching out across the political spectrum and jointly creating policies, and making decisions on important political issues, while holding each other accountable.

The third strategy of NIMD is therefore to foster a culture of democratic norms, values, behaviours, and skills amongst political practitioners. This is done by providing tailor-made political education and training programmes on issues pertaining to democratic knowledge, skills, and values. This includes, for example, training on how to speak, listen, and debate politically in a mutually respectful manner, with a focus on programmatic argumentation. In other words, through this strategy, NIMD invests in the knowledge and capacities that (potential) political actors need to effectively undertake their democratic roles.

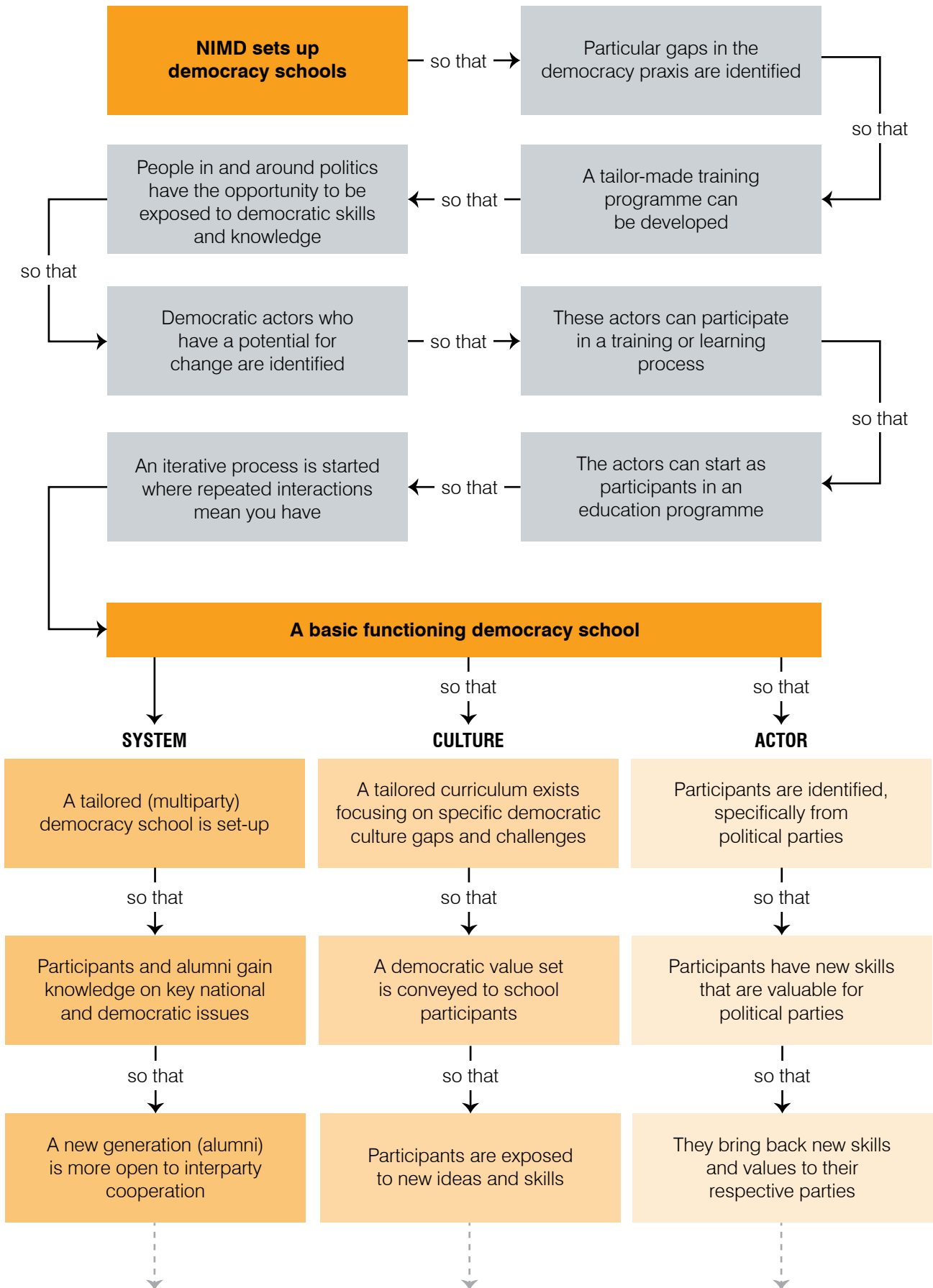
The trainings come in different shapes, forms, and durations, and overall serve a dual purpose. First, they strengthen participating political parties' and other political actors' leadership skills, thereby creating alumni that have been exposed to democratic norms and behaviour. Second, they allow (future) politicians to build common ground, meaningfully participate in the interparty dialogue and articulate clear party political positions. This is especially relevant in instances where a dedicated dialogue process is not yet possible. The democracy education programme can also be specifically targeted towards young leaders from government, civil society, media, or business sectors, as well as those interested in becoming politically involved.

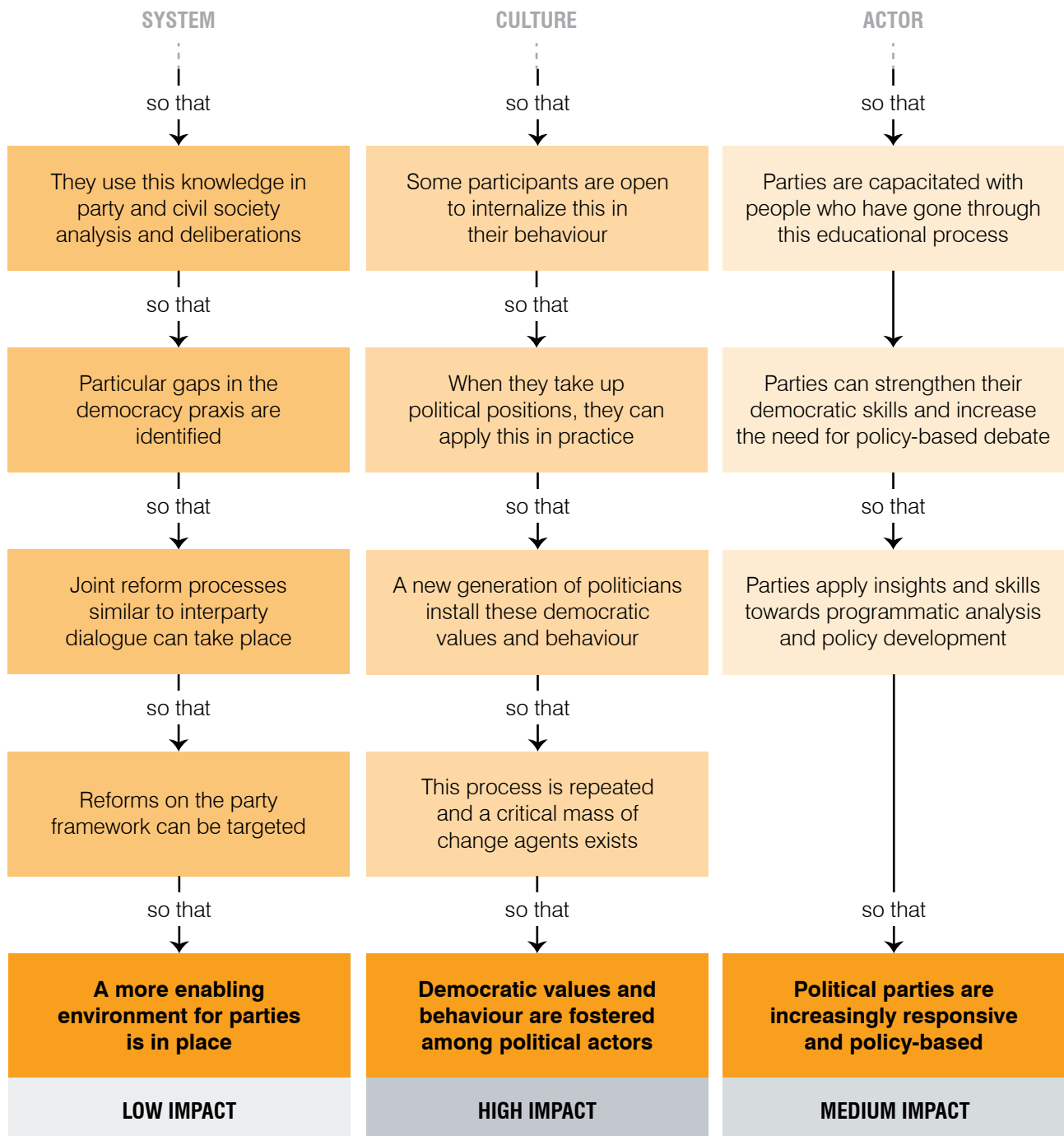
Moreover, through this strategy, NIMD empowers members of political parties and society who represent marginalized and minority groups to become effective political actors, leaders, campaigners, and fundraisers. NIMD specifically builds the capacity of female, young, and indigenous candidates. In this approach, NIMD also encourages a diverse composition of teachers, trainers, and participants. In the curricula, the democratic skills and behaviour are practised, including how to foster diversity and speak, listen, and debate politically in a mutually respectful manner about local, national, and global issues.

MAIN INSTRUMENT FOR CULTURE LEVEL CHANGE: DEMOCRACY EDUCATION – DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

The main instrument employed under this strategy is the setting up of dedicated [democracy schools](#) aimed at training political and/or civil society members in democratic knowledge and skills. This particular instrument has been piloted in Indonesia, where the approach was chosen due to the particularly challenging context to start an interparty dialogue. Over the years, this instrument has become widely used in a variety of country contexts and with different objectives and forms. It may differ in, for instance, target audience (only political party members or civic leaders), the way the instrument is offered (ad hoc trainings, multi-week classes or certificate-based long-term courses) and end goal (improve knowledge, change behaviour, build rapport and trust, strengthen party organizations, or a combination of these). The core, however, is to set up an educational facility with the specific component of democracy skills and knowledge training.

PATHWAY OF CHANGE: SETTING UP DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS





SO THAT THROUGH AN ITERATIVE PROCESS,
 NIMD CONTRIBUTES TO THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF:
INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT DEMOCRACIES

PEER EXCHANGES

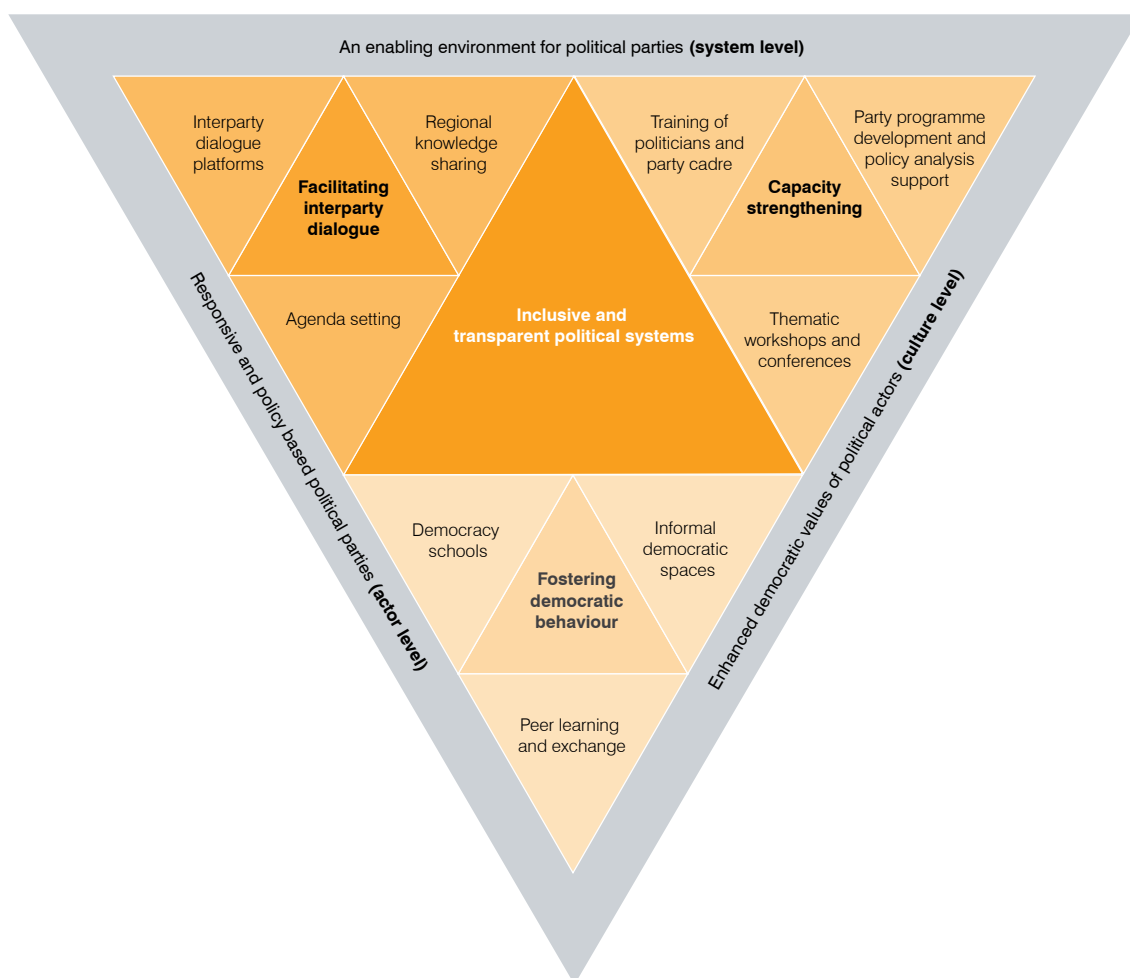
Political parties can learn a lot from parties in other countries and regions. Therefore, NIMD also invests in peer to peer learning. As an impartial broker we bring political parties of different countries in touch with each other. Exchange visits are possible throughout different stages of the programme. During the exchanges the politicians share knowledge, experiences and instruments, and discuss issues of national and regional interest.

5 THEORY OF CHANGE OVERVIEW

Political parties matter. They are central to achieving pluralistic, consolidated multiparty democracies, which deliver on citizens' aspirations and lead to sustainable development.

NIMD supports political parties in developing democracies and seeks to make an impact on three levels: political system, actor, and culture. These levels are interrelated. Political parties can only take up their role if the political system and environment allow them to do so (system level). At the same time, democratic systems need political parties and democrats in order to function and provide the stability and conditions needed for development (actor and culture level).

The visual below gives an overview of NIMD's goals, strategies and [instruments](#).



For more about our work visit our website www.nimd.org

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DEMOCRACY STARTS WITH DIALOGUE.