Final Evaluation of the Dialogue for Stability (DfS) programme

Final report

Client: Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

Rotterdam, 16 June 2021

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ECORYS

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List of abbreviations

ABPoC	Actor Based Pathways of Change
AWEPA	Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa
BART	Baseline and Review Toolkit
BI	Burundi
BLTP	Burundi Leadership Training Program
CA	Contribution analysis
CEMI	Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy
CO	Colombia
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 19
CPF	Crown Prince Foundation
CSO	Civil society organisation
DfS	Dialogue for Stability
DSH	Department of Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
EBM	Executive Bureau Members
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EECMD	Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy
EU	European Union
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-affected Setting
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPMD	Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy
HQ	Headquarters
JOR	Jordan
KII	Key informant interviews
KSR	Knowledge and Strategic Relations
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MACS	Multi Annual Country Strategy
MAP	Multi Annual Plan
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
MDF	Management for Development Foundation
MDP	Multiparty Dialogue Platform
MFA	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTR	Midterm review
MoPPA	Jordanian Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD-DAC	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OH	Outcome Harvesting
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PM	Project manager
PME	Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation

PoD	Power of Dialogue
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPDD	Strategic Partnership on Dialogue and Dissent
SRoL	Security and Rule of Law
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of trainers
TSoP	Tunisia School of Politics
TU	Tunisia
UKR	Ukraine
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USP	Unique selling proposition

List of tables and figures

Foreword

This report is the outcome of a review process that has involved a wide range of stakeholders, both in the Netherlands and in a selection of five countries where the Dialogue for Stability Programme (DfS) has been implemented. Ecorys would like to acknowledge the support provided for the realization of this final evaluation.

We want to thank the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy for facilitating the conduction of this final evaluation. Staff from the Ecorys Security and Justice Unit have been involved in different stages of this evaluation. In particular, we recognise the important in-house support provided by Jan Wynarski and Paula Heckenberger. José Luis Acosta, Elias Sentamba and Abdallah Abu-Zaid supported in the conduction of fieldwork in Colombia, Burundi and Jordan, respectively. Finally, Ecorys would like to thank all staff from DfS country offices and implementing partners, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands' Department of Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, Embassies and other development partners who have been interviewed within the scope of this final evaluation for their critical insights.

The final report has been authored by Dr Mike Beke, Valentijn Wortelboer and Federica Genna.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) launched the Dialogue for Stability (DfS) programme in 2016 with the overarching objective of supporting the realisation of inclusive and legitimate political processes in fragile and conflict-afflicted settings (FCAS). The programme's primary donor is the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) through its Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH). The programme has been designed to reflect NIMD's traditional three-pronged approach to democracy support, focusing on fostering changes at the levels of the democratic system, its actors and culture, albeit tailored to working in FCAS.

The DfS programme consists of core and non-core funding activities. The latter consists of country-level work and constitutes around 62% of the EUR 15 million budget of the programme. Regarding core funding, a total of 26% of the budget is allocated to activities related to the organisational development of NIMD. This consists of knowledge and innovation-related activities and fundraising and positioning. Overhead costs represent 12% of the budget. With these core funding activities, NIMD committed through DfS to investing in further understanding and articulating its knowledge-base, investing in the required skill-sets amongst its staff, and developing tools and instruments to facilitate inclusive democracy development in FCAS. Between 2016-2020, country programmes were implemented under DfS in Burundi, Colombia, Jordan, Tunisia and Ukraine, and a pilot regional programme was launched in 2019 for the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA). All country programmes implemented activities tailored to the local context, but which aimed to achieve the common objectives of developing inclusive political systems that contribute to stability; contributing to the establishment of legitimate and capable political actors in fragile settings; and finally ensuring that political practice is informed by democratic values. Additionally, diversity, inclusiveness and innovation were included as cross-cutting concepts to be mainstreamed and incorporated into programme activities.

With the programme ending in 2020, NIMD commissioned Ecorys to conduct an external final evaluation to assess the effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency of the programme, and the robustness of its Theory of Change. Additionally, the evaluation has looked into three other key characteristics of the programme: the implementation of the Knowledge and Innovation agenda; NIMD's strategy on fundraising and positioning, as included in the DfS programme document; and various aspects related to adaptive programming and internal learning.

The evaluation was conducted primarily through the application of three data collection tools: desk research (126 documents), interviews (96 individuals) and case studies (Burundi, Colombia and Jordan). In-country data collection was conducted by local consultants. Additionally, the evaluation relied on two specific qualitative data collection methods - outcome substantiation and contribution analysis - to assess the realisation of a sample of selected outcomes and validate the attributability of the results achieved to NIMD's interventions. Evaluation activities took place from February 2021 to June 2021.

Main findings

The evaluation confirmed that DfS' interventions are considered to be **relevant and respond to in-country needs**. NIMD is generally recognised by other development organisations, as well as local

institutions, as a valuable and capable player in all DfS countries, with the attributability of activities broadly confirmed.

The DfS programme has **effectively** achieved results that are linked to the outcome areas identified in programme documents. Interventions aimed at facilitating **interparty and multistakeholder dialogue** were effective in fostering relationships between representatives of opposing parties and promoting dialogue and peaceful resolution methods. **Training and capacity building activities** have been successful, with some identified differences between programme countries, in strengthening parties' organisational capacities. Finally, the **Democracy Schools** implemented across DfS programme countries have been effective in enhancing participants' understanding and knowledge of political systems, transmitting the values of dialogue and peaceful coexistence; and fostering increased interaction across party lines, as well as with other relevant actors in the political ecosystem. The DfS programme has allowed to draw cross country-comparisons on the enabling and inhibiting factors for success for each type of intervention implemented by NIMD, including in relation to working in FCAS. However, there is little evidence of this information being systematically collected and feeding into future planning cycles.

Contextual challenges linked to working in FCAS and the related use of adaptive programming by NIMD have meant that the originally planned outcomes have not always been achieved. Challenges also emerged with regard to assessing the effectiveness of DfS as a whole due to its particular design and structure against NIMD's three levels of system, actor and culture. Activities and tools that typically belong to one level have been used, depending on country context, for work that has been reported under other levels. Similarly, indicators that in the broader DfS framework are used to report progress against one level are used in some countries to measure and report progress against a different level. These are not issues *per se* concerning the content of the work carried out and the results achieved - on the contrary, they help demonstrate the interconnectedness of the three levels in the political ecosystem and see how work on one level can contribute to achieving impact on (potentially) all others. However, they do add a layer of complexity to the analysis of the results with regard to the effectiveness of 'level-specific work'.

The evaluation further found that more can be done to systematically incorporate **gender** in NIMD interventions. There is general attention to the inclusion of gender quotas for participation in Democracy Schools; including in the curricula gender and inclusivity aspects; and highlighting women success stories. However, limited steps are taken to ensure meaningful (i.e. impactful) participation of women in activities. More can be done also to ensure overarching learning by NIMD on gender, including gender approaches in FCAS.

In terms of programmatic and financial **sustainability**, the evaluation concludes that there is a certain degree of sustainability with regard to the results achieved by DfS, in particular thanks to the high perception of local ownership of interventions and results by both local implementers and beneficiaries, as well as to the proven ability of local staff to mobilise resources. The evaluation further found that there has been no concerted effort from NIMD central level to strengthen the **capacities of local partners and country offices** in a tailor-made manner, and with a view to filling gaps identified during DfS inception phase. Limited capacity development of local staff can represent an issue should NIMD decide to terminate a country programme. Finally, with regard to the impact of **COVID-19**, the evaluation concludes that NIMD has been able to successfully adapt its interventions, and that the pandemic has not significantly affected the achievement of results.

Regarding the **programme ToC**, the evaluation found that this is valid, but that the high-level formulation of the programme ToC, including its assumptions, does not allow NIMD country offices/local partners to steer interventions at a more granular level. The evaluation considers that the introduction of **Actor-Based Pathways of Change (ABPoC)** have been useful to bridge the gap between interventions and outcomes within the country-level ToCs, but finds that the resulting multiplicity of change pathways has made the overview also more complex. Finally, while the evaluation finds that the **adaptive programming** practice, as managed by NIMD, is functional, the lack of (documented) revisions to the ToC and ABPoCs make it challenging to understand how programme adaptations, even minor ones, have improved the achievement of programme outcomes.

Regarding **knowledge and innovation**, and **fundraising and positioning**, the evaluation found that knowledge production has been prolific and largely in line with stated objectives, as outlined in the DfS programme document. While the relevance of knowledge products in light of these defined objectives is clear, the link to programming impact in DfS countries has not become evident. Regarding fundraising and positioning, the evaluation found that NIMD had made significant progress in its efforts, with activities undertaken in these areas in line with the objectives as stated in the DfS programme document.

Regarding **internal learning**, the evaluation found that learning happens naturally and organically within NIMD, but does not follow a structured process. This presents a risk that NIMD is not able to capitalise on the wealth of expertise within its staff, which are considered to be the organisation's main assets. Similarly, consolidating NIMDs knowledge and practice-base is cornerstone to NIMDs ambitions to further develop as a market player. The evaluation thus considers that much is to be gained still here.

Lastly, with regard to the partnership between NIMD and the MFA (DSH), the evaluation concludes that the relationship is positive and has matured over time. However, the interaction continues to remain mainly anchored to the operational (i.e. programme progress) rather than the strategic level. At country level, the relationships with the embassies have visibly improved throughout the implementation of DfS. However, discrepancies with the level and type of engagement across programme countries remain visible. Further reflection is warranted on how to capitalise from the lessons learned in those countries where the interaction is on the highest level of the spectrum.

Recommendations

Based on these findings and conclusions, the evaluation put forward a number of recommendations. The key recommendations are presented in the following paragraphs:

Content-related recommendations
1. In order to ensure increased effectiveness of interventions, NIMD (country staff and local partners) should:
   a. Ensure election cycles and the related challenges (limited availability of political parties, etc) are factored into the planning and leveraged as opportunities to promote NIMD's work.
   b. Work, including through the maintenance of formal (e.g. establishment of focal points within institutions) and informal contacts (regular bilateral conversations) towards ensuring a) participation of the ruling party; and b) participation of the correct target group (i.e. party leadership and not regular members) to activities.

c. Strengthen partnerships with local partners in order to design interventions in a comprehensive manner, i.e. touching on elements, such as socio-economic conditions, that affect work at system level.

d. In cases where formal platforms for dialogue are established, continue to foster interaction outside the platform as well, with a view to ensuring the sustainability of results.

e. In the context of capacity building of political parties, develop plans for short-term, medium or long-term support based on the baseline assessment of organisational strength (or weakness) of the parties targeted. Where possible, ensure use of teams of trainers composed by members of opposing parties as a way to provide concrete examples of dialogue and cooperation.

f. In the context of Democracy Schools, consider restricting the number of students per class to around 25, as smaller groups were found to be more prone to internalising the values and skills acquired. Ensure engagement through homework, assignments and close follow-up with alumni.

g. Ensure the Schools' curricula are closely linked to the practical issues affecting the countries where they are implemented and tailored to the local context

h. Continue fostering peer exchanges at local, regional and international level

i. Ensure that gender and inclusivity are included in country programmes both by mainstreaming as well as through specific intervention.

Programme design-related recommendations

2. In order to ensure clearer reporting, improve aggregability of results and increase learning from the implementation of its interventions, NIMD (central level) should refrain from using the system-actor-culture structure for reporting and planning purposes. The structure can be maintained within the organisation for internal guidance and steering on a strategic level.

3. In order to improve aggregability of results as well as learning on gender-related interventions implemented, NIMD (central and country level) should ensure that information on interventions at country level on gender is collected systematically through the progress reporting, and that particular attention is paid to providing gender disaggregated data.

4. In order to ensure sustainability of programmatic results, NIMD (central and country level) should introduce the definition and application of 'criteria for the continuation of work' as part of (country) programme design and implementation. The criteria, which can be incorporated in the regular Political Economy Analysis, are intended to keep track of progress towards outcomes, keep the pulse on ongoing fundraising efforts, and capacity development of local staff, as a way of ensuring there are adequate measures in place to maintain local ownership.

5. With a view to ensuring that local implementers have the capacity to continue the interventions once NIMD support fades out, NIMD (central) should provide capacity development that is tailored to the needs of the staff of country offices/partner organisations.The creation of a tailor-made plan for capacity development would go hand in hand with the design and implementation of 'criteria for the continuation of work', in line with what stated above on maintaining local ownership.

Programme ToC

6. In order to allow NIMD to understand how key interventions produce sequential and incremental changes along the results chain, adapt the ToC so that this articulates the results' chain (inputs, outputs, intermediate outcomes, outcomes). This should be done with priority at the level of

country programme ToCs as this is where changes will be able to show direct impact on NIMDs ability to steer interventions towards achieving results. This would then also allow NIMD to specify assumptions for each results' level, so that staff in country offices/partner organisations can test and refine assumptions at the levels where the country programme interventions take place. Also, the PME unit is recommended to prepare guidance to facilitate this exercise and to develop a 'proxy' country programme ToC. This should focus on the form of the ToC, not on its content as this falls within the purview of the country offices/partner organisations. Such a sample ToC can then be used as a 'standard' against which country teams, with guidance from the PME unit, can then further develop their ToCs, that way ensuring a good level of consistency between ToC design between countries.

7. It is recommended to integrate the defined change pathways at the system, actor and culture-levels into 1 single programme ToC for each country-level. Ideally, this should also include integrating the ABPoC into this singular programme ToC at country-level. On a cautionary note, the evaluators appreciate that this action may be considered too soon by NIMD considering the limited timeframe both NIMD staff in The Hague and at country-level have had to become acquainted and comfortable with the use of the ABPoCs. In the scenario where NIMD desires to continue with the use of ABPoCs, the PME unit and/or the programme managers should become more involved in joint revisions of the country-level ABPoCs with the respective country teams to discuss jointly progress against individual ABPoCs, analyse constraints in achieving (further) progress, reflect on the implications for the viability of ABPoCs and revise these to reflect required changes, where warranted.

Internal learning
8. NIMD is recommended to place internal learning as an organisation-wide priority for further organisational development. The KSR unit must lead the work towards formalising the learning process. For this, support from NIMD leadership and management is paramount for these efforts to be successful. As part of formalising the learning process, the evaluation recommends to specify the following components or steps in this process: establish a clear mandate on organisational learning; develop a learning agenda; define (annual) learning programme; implement learning initiatives; communicate on learning outcomes.

1 Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the context of this final evaluation and outlines the Dialogue for Stability (DfS) programme and its main features.

1.1 Background to this evaluation

There is an increasing emphasis of the international community[1], to support peace- and state-building in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS). This is a challenging task due the generally low level of "democratic fabric" in these countries, illustrated by the limited and shrinking space for civil society and political opposition. NIMD, with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), responds to these challenges with the DfS programme. This programme embodies NIMD's ambition to position itself as an expert organisation delivering a unique and effective approach and achieving 'top-of-mind awareness' for donors on political party assistance and good governance.

This final evaluation sheds further light on the potential for NIMD to further grow in this field based on its performance under the DfS programme. It aims to not only help NIMD to understand how effective its approach in FCAS has been, but also to communicate externally the relevance and effectiveness its activities under the DfS programme. It should allow those involved in the programme to consider the merits and opportunities for scaling-up this type of support in future years. For other development organisations, this evaluation can be helpful to understand how international technical assistance can be planned and delivered in this complex context and trigger the exploration of new ways for coordination and cooperation with NIMD's programmes in-country.

1.2 DfS programme

The DfS programme was implemented between 2016 and 2020, with a budget of EUR 15 million. The programme was designed to support the implementation of NIMD's work in FCAS. The organisation has gained much experience in dealing with countries that are "either just out of conflict, find themselves in conflict, or are at risk of moving towards conflict."[2] The formulation of the DfS programme has been in response to the funding opportunity provided by the Department of Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) of the MFA.[3] It is one of the key programmes to deliver on the MFA's 2015 Policy and Theory of Change on Rule of Law and Security[4]. In a broader context, it aligns to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16 to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as SDG 5 to promote women's political participation and empowerment.

The overarching objective of the DfS programme is to support the realisation of inclusive and legitimate political processes in fragile states. This sits within NIMDs vision to "create favourable conditions for peace and security by accommodating divergent views and interests in society and

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[1]   See https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/new-deal/about-new-deal/ and SDG 16 https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16

[2]   Terms of Reference, p. 1.

[3]   NIMD has received funds from MFA since 2005 under various funding frameworks, such as the Political Parties programmes 1 and 2 programmes, the Strategic Partnership for Dialogue and Dissent, the DfS programme and the currently implemented Power of Voices programme.

[4]   Through its sub-goals 3.1 under 'Inclusive Political Processes' and 4.2 under 'Legitimate and Capable Governments' and, in the latest iteration of the Theory of Change (ToC) (2018), through sub-goal 3.2 on Political Governance.

by settling differences in a non-violent way."[5] The programme works with a **wide range of stakeholders**, such as political parties, parliamentarians, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), media organisations, academics, development partners, think tanks and government agencies.

The programme activities have been implemented in **Burundi**, **Colombia**, **Jordan**, **Tunisia** and **Ukraine**. The pilots in South Sudan and Lebanon were halted (respectively in 2016 and 2017) following discussions with the MFA and due to instability and violence.[6] Meanwhile, in response to demands from the MFA, other (regional) programme activities were added, including a pilot for the MENA region (2019), and exploratory activities in Venezuela (2019). The country programme interventions in Burundi, Colombia, Jordan, Tunisia and Ukraine received most funding within the approved budget for the DfS programme. Programme activities in Kurdistan, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, South Sudan and Venezuela were more of an exploratory nature.

While the DfS programme is the primary vehicle for NIMD to support interparty dialogue and political parties in FCAS, it is part of the organisation's overall programme portfolio. This includes the **Strategic Partnership for Dialogue and Dissent (SPDD)** programme,[7] implemented between 2016-2020 with a budget of EUR 32 million and also funded by the Dutch MFA.[8] The DfS and SPDD jointly provided funding for the full NIMD programme across approximately 20 countries. Current NIMD programming takes place, amongst others, under the Power of Dialogue (PoD)[9] and Women's Leadership and Participation for Peace (LEAP4Peace)[10] programmes.

The DfS programme consists of core and non-core funding activities. The latter consists of **country-level work** and constitutes around 62% of the budget. 26% of the budget is allocated to activities related to the organisational development of NIMD. This consists of **knowledge and innovation** and **fundraising and positioning**. With this, NIMD committed to making investments in further understanding and articulating its knowledge-base, investing in needed skill-sets amongst its staff, and developing tools and instruments to organise and facilitate its work in FCAS. Overhead costs make up the remaining 12% of the budget.

1.2.1 Programme approach

NIMD has put forward its own approach for working with political parties in FCAS[11], which is incorporated in the organisation's Theory of Change (ToC).[12]

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[5]   NIMD (2015). *Multi-Annual Plan. Stronger Parties. Deeper Democracies*. 2016-2020.

[6]   In its original design, the DfS programme targeted a number of countries in diverse geographical regions such as Burundi, Mali, Mozambique and South Sudan in sub-Saharan Africa; Colombia in Latin America; Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian territories and Tunisia in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region; Kurdistan in the Arab region; and Ukraine in Europe.

[7]   Targeting Benin, Georgia, Ghana, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

[8]   See MDF (2020). *Final evaluation of the strategic partnership for dialogue and dissent programme*.

[9]   Power of Dialogue is a five-year programme (2021-2025) implemented by a consortium led by NIMD to support the strengthening of relations between political and civic actors in 15 countries. The programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of its policy framework on strengthening civil society 2021-2025.

[10]   LEAP4PEACE is a five-year programme (2021-2025) implemented in Burundi, Colombia and Myanmar with the objective to strengthen women's full and meaningful inclusion in political and decision-making processes, in the context of the peace processes in these countries. The programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of its Women, Peace and Security agenda.

[11]   See NIMD (2015). *Working with political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings*.

[12]   See NIMD (2018). *Theory of Change*.

Figure 1.1 NIMD's Theory of Change for working in FCAS
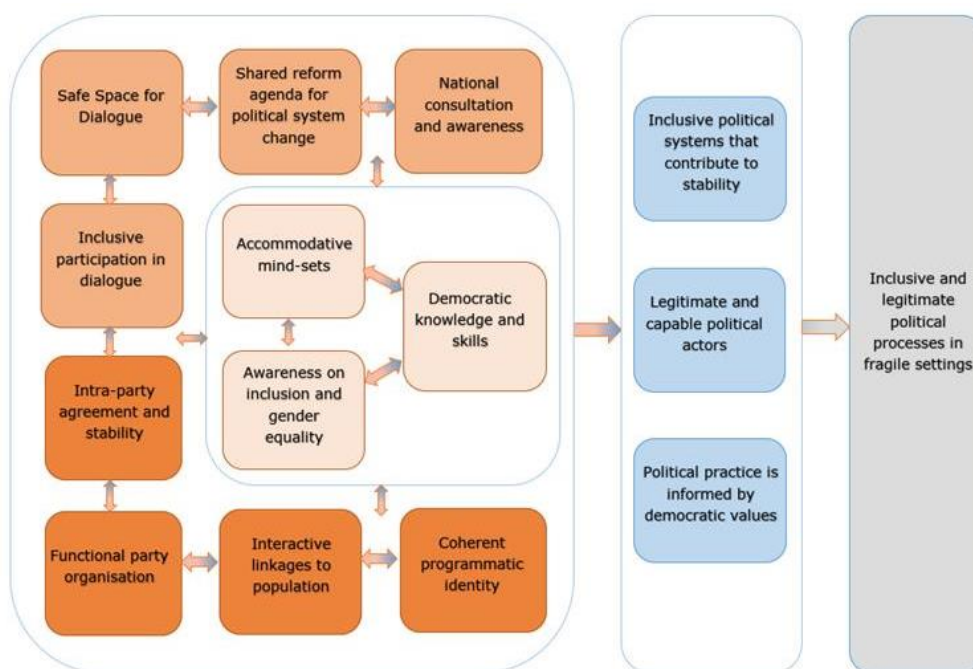
Source: NIMD (2015), DfS Programme Document

NIMD's overall goal is to support inclusive and transparent democracies through stronger political parties. To this end, it takes a three-pronged approach, focusing on changes at the levels of the democratic **system**, its **actors** and **culture**. While supporting the creation of open and accessible political systems, NIMD also strives to enhance the legitimacy and responsiveness of political actors. The table below provides an overview of the main objectives, strategies and instruments NIMD uses in its programming.

Table 1.1 Overview of NIMD objectives, strategies and instruments

Level	Objective	Strategy	Instrument
System-level change	An enabling environment for political parties	Facilitating interparty dialogue and cooperation	Setting up and managing interparty dialogue platforms
Actor level change	Responsive and policy-based political parties	Capacity building for organizational development and political programming	Strategic Planning Tool
Culture level change	Enhanced democratic values of political actors	Fostering democratic capital and behaviour	Democracy education

Source: NIMD (2018). *Theory of Change*, p. 16

On the **system-level**, NIMD supports the change from closed and exclusionary systems to open, enabling environments for political parties. These open and enabling environments demonstrate:
- Improved formal rules (including diversity and gender safeguards);
- Jointly developed analysis and policy reform agendas on a democratic framework; and
- Improved trust and relations between political actors.

NIMD support on the level of the system focuses on the facilitation of inter-party dialogue, for example, through the (i) establishment of safe spaces for dialogue; (ii) setting agendas for political reforms and the (iii) promotion of continuous cooperation between political actors.

On the **actor-level**, NIMD supports the change from weak, personality-driven political parties to well-structured, internally coherent and accountable parties. Responsive and policy-based political parties possess:

- Capacity to develop vision and strategic priorities;
- Capacity to analyse and develop policy; and
- Capacity to relate and interact with citizens.

NIMD support on the level of actors focuses on strengthening organisational capacity and building party capacity on political programming, for example, through (i) aggregating and articulating needs and interests of constituents; (ii) formulating coherent and viable policy alternatives and framing political choices for citizens; (iii) supporting the formulation of viable political programmes to set political choices; and (iv) developing mechanisms for increasing participation, representation and leadership within the parties.

On the **culture-level**, NIMD supports the change from personalised, predatory and antagonistic behaviour to open political interaction. Enhanced democratic values of political actors are built on:

- Knowledge and skills in democratic values and practice;
- Application of democratic values in practice; and
- Exposure to democratic norms and practice.

NIMD support on the level of culture focuses on strengthening democratic capital and behaviour, for example, through (i) strengthening democratic values and behaviour among political actors; (ii) establishing a foundation for accommodative politics and a culture of cooperation and compromise; (iii) strengthening leadership skills; (iv) building common ground among political actors; and (v) building capacities of marginalised groups (such as women, youth and indigenous people).

A key activity of NIMD under the programme is the establishment and running of **Democracy Schools** as an educational facility for democracy skills and knowledge training.

1.2.2 Country-level interventions

The DfS country work is based on specific country-level ToCs that align with the overall system, actor and culture level approach. Three main programme objectives are set, accompanied by a series of indicative activities (see table below).

Table 1.2   Outline of DfS programme activities

Programme objectives	Indicative activities
Inclusive political systems that contribute to stability	• Establishment and facilitation of safe-spaces • Agenda setting • Awareness-raising
Legitimate and capable political actors in fragile settings	• Internal conflict resolution and mediation • Basic organisational support • Supporting responsiveness and inclusion • Enhancing programmatic capacity
Political practice is informed by democratic values	• Democratic learning • Leveraging and linking • Awareness and behaviour

Country-level interventions under the DfS programme practically cover all of these elements, however, they have adapted activities based on: 1) a context analysis; 2) a baseline study; and 3) a capacity assessment[13] of the country office/partner organisation. In support of a conflict-sensitive programming approach, the DfS programme includes a political economy analysis (PEA) toolbox to provide staff and the country offices/partner organisations with a robust evidence-base in order to refine its comprehension of the country context.

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[13]   Based on the ECPDM 5-core capabilities model.

2 Methodology

The following chapter briefly presents the methodology applied for this final evaluation. A full explanation of the methodology is provided in Annex 1. The intervention logic used to guide this evaluation is presented in Annex 2.

2.1 Purpose and scope of this evaluation

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to generate insight into the implementation of interventions and the level of achievement of outcome results for the DfS programme. The work geared on the one hand towards demonstrating **accountability** of the DfS programme and, on the other towards facilitating **learning** on NIMD's approach towards planning and delivering results in FCAS.

The DfS programme has been evaluated on its **effectiveness**, **efficiency** and **sustainability**. In addition, the evaluators looked at the robustness of the **programme's ToC**, the effectiveness of the programme's **knowledge and innovation** agenda and its strategy on **fundraising and positioning**, as well as various aspects related to **learning and partnerships**. These criteria have been used for the reporting of findings below.

Considering the broad scope of the evaluation, **the focus** of the assessment was **demarcated** to prioritise the data collection and analysis of evidence gathered under the indicators related to:
- assessing the achievement of outcomes;
- the role and use of programme - and country-level ToCs; and
- the role and application of (internal learning) and feedback loops as part of the DfS programme's delivery model.

The demarcated focus has resulted in the application of **different levels of data rigour** for data collection and analysis against the different evaluation criteria.[14]

This evaluation has covered all the interventions financed by the programme between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2020. At country level, this includes interventions in Burundi, Colombia, Jordan, Tunisia[15] and Ukraine, as well as the MENA regional programme and exploratory activities undertaken in a number of countries. More in-depth analysis was done with the help of local evaluators for: Burundi, Colombia and Jordan.

The work for this exercise lasted five months (between February and June 2021), and has directly targeted those who have designed, implemented and have been targeted by the interventions. International development organisations present on the ground were also included amongst respondents for this evaluation in order to better assess the achievement of outcomes and impacts of NIMDs interventions.

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[14] Primary: data which falls directly within the focus areas of the evaluation and which contributes to in-depth analysis on these focus areas. This data was collected at central and country-levels (Burundi, Colombia, Jordan). Secondary: data which falls within the focus areas of the evaluation, but where in-depth analysis on these focus areas is limited. This data was collected at central and country-levels (Burundi, Colombia, Jordan, Tunisia, Ukraine). Tertiary: data which falls outside of the focus areas of the evaluation, but which contributes to the overall framework for understanding the priority evaluation criteria. This data was collected mostly at central level and, only occasionally, at country-level.

[15] The evaluators have drawn on an in-depth country level evaluation for Tunisia, which was done by DEMO Finland.

2.2 Evaluation criteria

The DfS programme has been assessed against the standard OECD-DAC evaluation criteria.[16] The assessment of these criteria has been carried out against the ToC of the programme.

Effectiveness has looked at the extent to which the DfS programme achieved its intended objectives, paying particular attention to whether and how this was done in the FCAS context and whether planned interventions have proven to be effective. Additional attention was placed on the **adaptive elements of the programme,** as well as the inclusion and achievement of **gender-related results**. The evaluators worked on the assumption that, when dealing with programmes implemented in FCAS and therefore whose realisation is highly susceptible to context-changes, effectiveness cannot merely be evaluated by looking statically at whether the objectives set out at the inception of the programme have been realised. Instead, focus needs to be placed on whether the programme has been able to adapt to the contextual changes in a manner that allows the achievement of meaningful change. As part of the assessment of effectiveness, this evaluation has included **outcome substantiation** and **contribution analysis** exercises, which were aimed at counterchecking with informed parties the effective realisation of a sample of outcomes and their attribution to NIMD's work.

Efficiency has looked at the extent to which the DfS interventions have delivered results in an economic and timely way. In particular, this included looking at whether and how the overhead costs were reasonably managed and if the programme's interventions were implemented within the constraints of time and budget.

Sustainability has looked at the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue. This has included the existence or lack thereof of phasing out strategies, the ownership at local level of the interventions, as well as financial dependency from NIMD headquarters (HQ) and the capacities of partner organisations and country offices. Under this criterion, the evaluators also looked at whether and how the COVID-19 crisis has impacted delivery of work, and how the programme sought to mitigate this.

2.3 Evaluation questions and matrix

The table below provides a succinct overview of the evaluation questions that have guided the approach for this exercise. The criteria/themes which the evaluators have placed particular focus on as part of the demarcated approach have been highlighted in light blue.

The complete **evaluation matrix** used for this assignment is presented in Annex 3.

Table 2.1   Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions
Effectiveness
• What have been the main outcome level results achieved in relation to (1) political system, (2) political actor, and (3) political culture level objectives as set out in the DfS Programme Document and in-country ToCs?

- What can be said about the plausibility and strength of the contribution relationship between programme interventions and outcomes that have been reported? How likely is it that the outcome would have been there with/without the contribution?
- What can be said about the effectiveness of the programme interventions in the FCAS context? Which interventions and results can be identified that appear to be particularly effective in achieving dialogue and inclusive politics in FCAS contexts? Where have interventions not been effective and results difficult to achieve, and which factors account for this? Where has the programme in its adaptations and trying and testing of interventions been less successful, and in trying innovations and taking programming risks, where have decisions been taken that did not work out, or have led us to conclude that at the end of the intervention little or nothing sustainable has been achieved?
- To what extent have the interventions for Knowledge and Innovation contributed to the effectiveness of the programme, and helped achieve outcome level results?

Efficiency
- Are overhead costs reasonable and being managed well?
- Have interventions been implemented within the planned period and budget?

Sustainability
- What evidence exists to suggest that the outcome results achieved will be sustained, or not, after the NIMD DfS funding ends?
- What evidence exists that partner organizations and country offices have built capacities so that DfS programme interventions can be sustained after DfS support is phased out, or not?
- To what extent has the Covid-19 crisis affected outcome level changes achieved in the programme, for example as trust is reduced and dialogue progress is undermined, and if so, how has the programme tried to mitigate this?

Programme ToC
- To what extent has the overall programme ToC been valid, and had programme implementation provided evidence for the change pathways contained in the programme's ToC?
- Have programme ToC assumptions held?
- Have Actor-Based Pathways of Change at country level been adapted to reflect contextual changes, assumption changes, or programme implementation monitoring?
- When adapting programming practices have been applied, how have they influenced programme outcomes?

Knowledge and Innovation agenda; strategic fundraising and positioning
- To what extent has Knowledge and Innovation Agenda been implemented successfully, and how have results of the learning and innovation been incorporated in country programming, and reached external stakeholders?
- To what extent have results under the DfS non-programme objectives for Fundraising and Positioning being reached?
- Has the DfS programme been effective in influencing strategies of external stakeholders, especially donors?

Internal learning
- How have the conclusions and recommendations of the Mid-Term Review been followed-up?
- What was the efficiency and relevance of the NIMD's internal learning loops for the (country) programmes adaptation/impact?
- What has been the basis for programme adaptations, and what reasons can be identified for adaptation, including possibly contextual changes, assumption changes, programme implementation monitoring, or other), what exactly has led to adaptations (and when and on what basis e.g. it has been decided not to adapt)?
- How have NIMD's DfS experiences, lessons, insights gained during the duration of the programme been incorporated within the organization?
- What has been the experience in working with local partners and country offices: did they deliver according to expectations? Have working relationships changed during the implementation phase? To

what extent has the final phase of DfS has taken into account continuation / termination of the respective country programmes?

- What have we learned around country selection decisions, ie around countries that were subsequently added (Jordan, MENA, Venezuela); and around the "exploratory activities" for the program in South Sudan that was stopped?

- What has been the experience in working with the MFA in the DfS partnership? Has the contractual relationship matured towards a more strategic one? In making adaptive programming decisions, how was this communicated to the MFA? Which changes was DSH informed of? In advance or afterwards? Has optimal use been made of (possibilities for) cooperation: has NIMD pro-actively kept / sought contact with The Hague and the embassies? What did this contact consist of? Have embassies been consulted about a division of roles / has use been made of the network of the embassies - and have embassies and the MFA in turn been able to make sufficient use of the points of entry of NIMD? What have been spoilers or enablers to a more strategic relationship? To what extent has DSH, as donor, adopted a different stance in this partnership from the 'traditional' donor-implementer relationship?

2.4   Data collection tools and methods

The team has relied primarily on three data collection tools: **desk research**, **interviews** and **case studies**, and two specific methods: **outcome substantiation** and **contribution analysis**. The findings obtained through these three different techniques have been triangulated to ensure the reliability of the conclusions and recommendations.

Over 100 documents have been reviewed by the evaluators., and an overview can be found in Annex 4. A **meta-analysis** of the data extracted from the programme's (multi)-annual plans, progress reports, baselines, midlines and outcome harvesting reports was used to identify preliminary findings from the desk research, which were subsequently triangulated with interview case study data.

Ninety-six interviews at the central and country-level were held with key stakeholders to obtain an in-depth understanding of the programme.[17] The interviews allowed the evaluation team to gather **qualitative evidence** to support the programme's performance against the main evaluation criteria and supplement the quantitative data provided by the meta-analysis. An overview of the stakeholders can be found in Annex 5. Interview guidelines were developed by the core team against the evaluation matrix for each target group. The guidelines were shared and discussed with the responsible national consultants for the case studies to ensure a standardised data collection process.

The evaluators have conducted case studies in Burundi, Colombia and Jordan. The data collection process for the case studies was based on desk research and key informant interviews. The selection of countries was made on the basis of balanced geographic coverage; balance between longer standing and more recent programmes; and avoidance of duplication of work[18]. The case studies were each led by a national consultant, whose work was overseen and supported by one person from the evaluation core team. In addition, representatives of the core team attended case

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[17]   KIIs included scoping interviews (four), which were held at inception stage with NIMD staff in The Hague, country programme managers and the programme donor (i.e. MFA/DSH); targeted semi-structured interviews (92), which were conducted during the data collection phase with other key informants, such as country office/partner organisations' staff, other development partners on the ground and beneficiary groups; and focus group discussions (FGDs) (three), which were held in some case study countries to gather a better understanding of the beneficiaries' opinion of the DfS programme.

[18]   A final evaluation of the programme in Tunisia was carried out by DEMO Finland and therefore this country was not selected for a case-study.

study interviews with programme managers, local country offices and Dutch embassy representatives. These interviews took place over Microsoft Teams.

Selected outcomes

Substantiation and contribution analysis were used to strengthen the evidence-base of findings on the effectiveness of the DfS programme. These exercises were carried out by the national consultants in the three case study countries. The methodological note used to guide them is presented at Annex 6. A sample of nine outcomes[19] was selected following an analysis based on an outcome mapping exercise and confirmed with the relevant NIMD staff at country level. The outcomes were selected on the basis of relevance (i.e. the number of country programmes working on these outcomes), priority (i.e. the value for NIMD's core work on interparty dialogue and political party strengthening), and representation (i.e. a balanced number of outcomes across the levels of system, actor and culture).

Burundi:
- Shared agenda for steps towards peace and stability developed (system);
- Improved organisational capacity of political actors in fragile settings to effectively and legitimately participate in political (dialogue) processes (actor);
- Improved programmatic capacity of political actors in fragile settings to effectively and legitimately participate in political (dialogue) processes (actor)

Colombia:
- A more open and inclusive political system that contributes to stability (system);
- Responsive and capable political parties (actor);
- Enhanced democratic values of political actors (culture);

Jordan:
- The legislative framework on political system of Jordan, including political parties law, decentralization law and electoral law facilitates fully-fledged and functional multiparty democracy, as well as guarantees fair political representation of all groups in society, including youth, women, minorities and marginalised groups (system);
- The political culture is conducive to multiparty democracy model (culture);
- Political parties/movements have democratic and inclusive structures and practices and effectively engage with and represent citizens (culture).

2.5   Data analysis and limitations

The data collected through desk research (including the meta-analysis), the interviews and case studies (including the resulting contribution analysis and substantiation of outcomes reports) has been triangulated and analysed. An internal data analysis workshop was held between the core team and the national consultants on 6 May 2021 to discuss and confirm the identification of findings at central and country level. The workshop provided the opportunity to finetune and better contextualise the preliminary findings, which were later discussed in a workshop on preliminary findings with NIMD on 10 May 2021 and a workshop on preliminary conclusions and recommendations on 10 June 2021. The reflections resulting from this process have helped shape the consolidated findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in chapter 3 of this report.

Several data collection and analysis limitations were noted:
- The majority of the fieldwork has been carried out **remotely** as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions. However, this limitation is mitigated by the employment of national consultants who have been able to interact directly with local stakeholders, including programme beneficiaries and other development organisations on the ground.

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[19]   The baseline for the assessment was the original formulation of these outcomes.

- The compacted timeline for the implementation of this assignment, against the breadth and depth of data to be collected, has significantly **compressed the data analysis process.** In this case, the risks of incomplete or inaccurate findings and conclusions were mitigated with the addition of two validation workshops with NIMD staff.

3 Findings

3.1 Effectiveness

The standard understanding of effectiveness *ex-post* based on OECD-DAC criteria is that it represents 'the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.'[20]

> The key question underpinning the assessment of the degree of effectiveness of an intervention is: 'Is the intervention achieving its objectives?'

Measuring results in highly volatile contexts such as FCAS, however, is not always a straightforward task. The setting of the DfS programme has required NIMD to implement its interventions in a manner that allows the organisation to deal with the realities of operating in unpredictable and kinetic politico-institutional environments. This has added significant complexity to the already politically sensitive work of democracy building and has translated to less than linear programming for several countries, as will be detailed further below. When dealing with programmes implemented in FCAS and therefore whose realisation is highly susceptible to context-changes, effectiveness cannot merely be evaluated by looking statically at whether the objectives set out at the inception of the programme have been realised. Rather, focus needs to be placed on whether the programme has been able to adapt to the contextual changes in a manner that allows the achievement of meaningful change, in line with the general, specific and operational objectives.

Through the lens of such a 'nuanced' mind-set, this evaluation of the effectiveness of the DfS programme has focused on the realisation (or non-realisation) of outcome level results; assessed the plausibility of the contribution relationship between the interventions and the reported outcomes; and analysed the application of NIMDs intervention in the FCAS context. The evaluation also focused on those aspects which worked well and those which did not. A particular focus has also been placed on the integration of gender aspects in DfS activities, and whether and how this was effective. The key findings against this background are presented in the following sections.

3.1.1 Contribution of the DfS programme to actual outcomes in FCAS

Main outcome level results achieved

As already outlined in Chapter 1 of this report, the DfS programme seeks to support the realisation of inclusive and legitimate political processes in fragile settings. The programme had three objectives linked to the political system, political actor, and political culture level and aimed at supporting this overarching goal, as shown in the figure below:

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[20] See: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/543e84ed-en/1/3/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/543e84ed-en&_csp_=535d2f2a848b7727d35502d7f36e4885&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book&_ga=2.114414087.107591468.1621325603-70811332.1621236307#section-d1e3395

Figure 3.1   System-actor-culture level
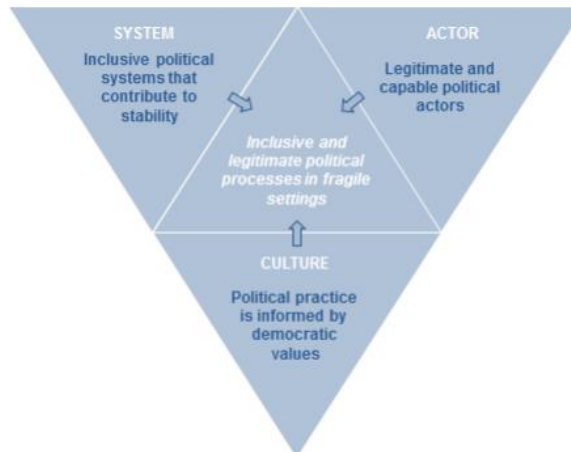
Source: adapted from NIMD (2015) DfS Programme Document

Specific causal pathways under each level were then developed for each DfS country based on the local context.

Before looking more in detail at the results achieved by the programme against these objectives, specifically in the context of the individual countries, some general considerations on the effectiveness of the programme overall – and on limitations to assessing its impact are warranted.

The DfS programme does not work with set targets. This does affect the measurement of the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its objectives. As already highlighted by the 2018 MTR, observable results are mostly related to the implementation of the activities – therefore on output level – rather than outcomes. The use of mainly quantitative indicators, even when at intermediate outcome level, that refer to either the number of interventions implemented, the number of attendees to events, the number or percentage of target groups (i.e. political parties), provide little insights as to the actual impact of these interventions. Annual reporting both at country and at programme level remains more descriptive than analytical, in the majority of cases presenting a description of the interventions and activities that have taken place, rather than a reflection on how these contribute to the achievement of outcome level results.

Additionally, and despite the introduction in 2018 of standardised intermediate outcome-indicators into country programme annual plans and result tables, different measurement approaches from base- to mid- and endline (e.g. numbers, percentages, assessment on scale 1 to 4) continue to hamper the aggregability of results. The style and quality of the narrative reports also tends to vary from country to country, further contributing to a patched overview[21]. This makes it challenging to obtain a comprehensive picture of the results of DfS as a whole. Interviews with NIMD staff at the central-level have highlighted that aggregability of results at outcome level[22] across country programmes was not a specific objective in light of the inherent challenge to compare programmes and results across significantly different contexts. While this is understandable, it is important to note that an excessive focus on context specificity can hinder learning possibilities, i.e. in cases where similar activities and processes are rolled-out across different countries, the lack of underlying reflection on what aggregate results can tell us hampers the possibility to learn about which approaches work in which types of context, and why.

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[21]   One interviewed representative of the NIMD PME team also reported that there is limited capacity to document and properly report on indicator measurements, and that often there is scepticism with taking outcome measurements from country programmes at face value.

[22]   It is noted that interviewed NIMD PME staff and Programme Managers confirmed that efforts to improve aggregability at output/intermediate outcome level were consciously made, although with little success.

Finally, NIMD's 2018 institutional ToC lists the flagship instruments to achieve system, actor and culture level change, i.e., respectively, facilitating **interparty dialogue** and policy development, including through the use of dialogue **platforms**; conducting **trainings** to enhance the organisational capacities of political parties, and setting up and implementing **Democracy Schools**. However, the evaluation found that, in the context of country reporting, activities and tools that typically belong to one level have been used (depending on country context needs and limitations) for work that has been reported under other levels. This was the case, for example, in **Jordan**. Here, work under system and actor was discontinued due to resistance of the local government. However, in annual reporting, interventions which technically fall under the culture level as they form part of the Democracy Schools, are reported as 'progress on actor level'. Similarly, indicators that in the broader DfS framework are used to report progress against one level are used in some countries to measure and report progress against a different level. These are not issues *per se* with regard to the content of the work carried out and the results achieved - on the contrary, they help demonstrate the interconnectedness of the three levels in the political ecosystem and see how work on one level can contribute to achieving impact on (potentially) all others. However, it does add a layer of complexity to the analysis of the results with regard to the effectiveness of 'level-specific work'.

Against the background of these considerations, the following sections present an overview of the findings collected with regard to the implementation of each type of intervention, providing comparisons across the different DfS country contexts.

Facilitating interparty dialogue (platforms) and supporting inclusive policy development

Country overview

As outlined above, the DfS programme seeks to contribute to the establishment of open and inclusive political systems which contribute to legitimate stability. Facilitating interparty dialogue which supports inclusive policy development is the main tool to achieve this. Between 2016 and 2019,[23] over 150 interparty dialogues were held[24] and 25 joint policies[25] formulated within the framework of DfS[26].

Although DfS has supported dialogue encounters (both interparty and multi-stakeholder meetings) with political parties from both ruling and opposition groups in all programme countries, a formal interparty dialogue platform only exists in **Tunisia**. The Tunisian Multiparty Dialogue Platform (MDP) was set up in 2016 and involves 13 political parties, including high-level representatives such as party leaders and parliamentarians. The platform is used as a space for debate and discussion, training and fostering the development of joint policies. A recent final evaluation of the Tunisian programme presented the platform as one of its clear achievements: interviewed party representatives particularly highlighted a) how **dialogue activities enabled them to become acquainted with people from other parties** and improve their **ability to listen to different perspectives**; and b) the **added value of the international and regional contacts** made through seminars and peer-exchanges. Additionally, between 2016-2020 platform members **signed**: a joint statement on the need to accelerate the ratification of the law on decentralisation (2017); the journal of local communities and a charter on the electoral climate for local elections (2018), both submitted to Parliament; a highly-praised charter for loyal electoral competition (2019). Although the platform is considered to be a unique forum for promoting constructive dialogue in Tunisia, the programme

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23 2019 is the latest Annual report available for the programme.
24 In Tunisia, Colombia, Ukraine and Burundi
25 In Colombia, Tunisia and Ukraine
26 Calculation made based on DfS annual reports and intermediate outcomes result framework.

evaluation had found that there was no evidence that platform activities had led to increased cross-party dialogue and collaboration outside the platform. This affects the sustainability of the results obtained and their long-term impact.

In DfS programme countries where actual platforms were not set up, but work with parties to facilitate dialogue existed, this has focused on organising interparty/multi-stakeholder workshops and trainings; supporting the development of inclusive policy proposals; conducting research and drafting policy papers for learning purposes. This was the case, for example, of Colombia and Burundi. In **Colombia**, work at system level was initially anchored in supporting the implementation of the Peace Agreements.[27] In 2016, NIMD was designated as a key actor in the implementation of the second chapter of the Peace Accord on 'Political participation: opening democracy to build peace'. This in itself reflects the strong reputation of the organization in the country. The designation entailed, on the one hand, direct participation to a high-level technical committee providing recommendations to the Government for **reforming the electoral system**; and, on the other, supporting the implementation of the political participation agreement, including by providing technical assistance for the **conversion the FARC-EP** into a political party. Between 2016-2020, NIMD Colombia has been prolific in the implementation of activities targeting the system level. This ranged from participation to events and forums; consultations as part of the high-level technical committee; organisation of intraparty dialogue meetings; support to political reforms; and publication and dissemination of several research and policy papers. Noteworthy interventions have included:

- Support to the debate of the **Electoral Code Act** on parity and universality in electoral lists, starting with an evaluation of the results of previous reform and promotion of measures to prevent and eradicate violence against women in politics. The proposed elements were accepted and incorporated in the Act.
- Technical inputs to the formulation of the **Statute of Opposition**, which helps guarantee the rights of opposition parties.
- A **local pilot mediation process** with political parties, where NIMD acted as a conciliator, applying conflict resolution techniques in bilateral and multiparty meetings. This led to the signature of an agreement by political parties to prevent the scalation of violence and for the establishment of a permanent multiparty dialogue initiative.
- The provision of **technical assistance** to:
  - The National Electoral Council (upon their request) with the design, development and dissemination of educational content for the local elections;
  - The multiparty youth board on a Bill to regulate their association,
  - The Party Cambio Radical on a Bill for Open Government.
- Support to the **Political Reform** debate on the adoption of Parity, Alternation and Universality in all electoral lists. The reform was eventually not successful.
- The exploration of **innovative ways to foster dialogue:**
  - Based on the understanding gathered during a workshop attended by eight political parties that they were facing challenges in registering members, a pilot project was developed to support them through CiviCRM. CiviCRM is an open-source tool   which allows political parties to register and communicate with their members.
  - The collaborative design and testing of a toolbox for current and emerging parties serving as a repository for legislation and best practices (national and international) on political and electoral action.

The contribution of the work carried out by the Colombia office is visible in the number of initiatives supported which, cumulatively, can help foster change at system level, as well as in the vast

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[27]   The system level objective was 'The political system is more open and inclusive, contributing to a successful implementation of the Peace Agreements'.

number of actors involved – from parties, to governmental authorities and international organisation, civil society and academia. Overall, both beneficiaries of the programme and external stakeholders remarked that NIMD interventions are perceived as a valid element of sector coordination and advocacy dynamics, directly relevant to effective policy and decision-making processes[28]. The methodologies, valid research documents and the well-structured guidance are widely appreciated, along with the **comprehensive pluralist approach and active participation** in discussion scenarios, which allow institutional and political actors to feel comfortable with carrying out dialogue[29] with others perceived as opponents and on sensitive subjects. The list of outcomes harvested for 2020 in Colombia indicates that NIMD's technical assistance has been sought out by key actors within the government (e.g. Ministry of Internal Affairs) and the international community (e.g. United Nations) often. This testifies to the reputation the office has built in the country. The Colombia office's flexibility in adapting the course of its interventions to the context is also commendable: as the Peace Agreements progressively lost traction, the interventions' focus shifted to providing technical support to the development of other necessary bills; as violence against political, social, and communal leaders and women leaders mounted, NIMD began publishing research on these topics;[30] and as the need emerged to maintain the interest of political parties as the technical assistance field was becoming saturated, the organisation began experimenting with innovative approaches, i.e. the use of digital tools, and the promotion of open government strategies.[31] The effectiveness of the DfS programme in Colombia was also affected by contextual challenges: for example, the loss of relevance of the Peace Agreements meant that little work in that area could be carried out as envisioned; despite NIMD's effort to foster the recognition of principles of inclusion, parity and universality, normative gaps remain that do not allow for the effective exercise of these rights[32]. Work to support key legislative acts can potentially have a high impact, but the decision to adopt such acts and implement them falls outside NIMD's scope of influence. Representatives of the Colombia country office highlighted this during one of the case study interviews, presenting the example of the Political Reform which NIMD strongly supported but which ultimately did not pass through [33].

Another DfS country where contextual developments significantly affected political dialogue work is **Burundi**. Despite initial assessments when programming first started of the existence of a promising space for political dialogue, the context progressively deteriorated during the course of the implementation of DfS. The shrinking space for dialogue also affected the ability of NIMD and its local partner Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) to work on the ground.[34]

As a result of the challenges posed by the national context, NIMD and BLTP have not been able to achieve their stated objective under the system level, i.e. the achievement of an 'environment for political parties that is conducive for peaceful, inclusive and democratic elections.'[35] Despite this, the evaluation found evidence of incremental progress contributing to the originally identified outcome areas. Such progress was achieved through fostering channels for interparty and multi-

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[28]   As described especially by beneficiaries and development partners, but also by external stakeholders.

[29]   Perception shared by the political parties and members of Congress interviewed, all from the beneficiaries group.

[30]   Amongst others: "Dynamics of political violence since the signing of the Peace Agreement and in the framework of its implementation: challenges and proposals for authorities and political parties for the elections local 2019"; Report "A country without leaders is not a country"; "Report on violence against political, social and communal leaders. January - October 2020".

[31]   Annual reports 2017, 2019 Colombia

[32]   Annual report 2020 Colombia

[33]   The Annual report 2020 details that the reform was rejected "due to legislative calendar and high oppositions, as it aimed to replace the National Electoral Council, close electoral lists, and make them gender-parity, reduce Congressman salaries, among other changes."

[34]   Among other challenges, the organisation was hit with a partial suspension order in November 2018 which limited its activities on the ground, and a full suspension order from December 2019 to March 2020.

[35]   The objective was tied to three outcome statements: 1) Reduced levels of polarization between political actors; 2) Shared agenda for steps towards peace and stability developed; and 3) Higher recognition and approval ratings of political actors by citizens.

stakeholder dialogue (although it is recognised that this became more difficult from 2017 onwards, after a positive start in 2016, due to resistance from the government), as well as technical workshops, and formal and informal consultations.

As the space for operating at the national level started to progressively close, NIMD and BLTP shifted the focus of their activities to the regional and local level, rather than the national level, and towards more informal communications and consultation methods, showing flexibility and spirit of adaptation. Specific initiatives that have contributed to ensuring continuation of some level of activity – despite this restricting political space for dialogue – have included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between BLTP and the Ministry of Interior to facilitate BLTP's work on the ground; and ongoing informal bilateral consultations with the ruling party to encourage participation to activities. The **ruling party's limited participation in activities** emerged as a factor affecting the impact of the interventions: BLTP reported that they recognised that the involvement of the ruling party is particularly important for success, as its participation influences that of other parties and legitimises the work with the opposition.[36] The **close relationship with the Ministry** was also presented by an interviewed BLTP representative as a key condition for effectiveness, explaining that it facilitated contact with leaders at the local level, such as governors of provinces, communal and local administrations. The interviewee also highlighted the importance of **establishing a good network with other relevant actors** beyond political parties, such as other CSOs and religious leaders.

Although the months preceding the 2020 general elections witnessed, as reported by the DfS Programme Manager for Burundi, a reduction of the legal and physical space for the opposition to meet, organise and campaign, election days passed relatively peacefully. This was mentioned by interviewed respondents in the context of the Burundi case study as a particularly noteworthy aspect. Although not solely attributable to NIMD and BLTP's work, interviewees on the ground reported that lessons learned with regard to peaceful cohabitation between parties in the context of the workshops organised by BLTP contributed to limiting violence. In particular, interviewed representatives from political parties indicated that NIMD/BLTP workshops helped them understand 'the loss of profit in using violence'. Interviewees also indicated that they witnessed positive examples of BLTP and NIMD trainees proactively intervening to peacefully settle scuffles between militants of opposing parties in two local provinces. At the same time, it should be noted that the elections still took place against a background of large scale human rights abuses, abductions and persecutions of opposition supporters and activists.

In some DfS countries, direct work with political parties was not possible. In the case of **Jordan**,[37] this was due to resistance by the Government. The Jordanian programme is centred around the establishment of a School of Politics. Initially, according to the interviewed Jordan Country Manager, the School's programme included opportunities to engage intellectually with political party leaders and to hold dialogue sessions. As a result of increasing resistance from the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs (MOPPA) towards directly approaching political parties, the programme shifted from fostering interaction with and within parties, to solely focusing on training women and youth as part of the School of Politics. The aim of the programme was that they would obtain a deeper understanding of the political system and thus be enabled to work towards a reform agenda that would allow them to increase the space for political engagement. In **Ukraine,** direct

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36   Annual report 2020 Burundi.
37   The evaluators note that the Jordan country programme represents an exception within DfS in terms of its implementation timeframe. The programme was initially kick-started jointly with a local partner (Identity Centre). However, the collaboration was discontinued in August 2018 due to allegations of financial mismanagement by other donors, and following a NIMD commissioned audit. Resources were then re-directed into opening a NIMD country office in Jordan, and actual programme activities only reprised in 2019. The considerably shorter timeframe complicates assessing the effectiveness of the entire country programme due to the longer time needed to begin to see impact. This was acknowledged by the Jordan Programme Manager.

work with political parties was also not carried out as they were assessed as too weak. Here too, the focus was re-directed towards the setting up and maintenance of five Democracy Schools. Dialogue was facilitated through the publication and dissemination of policy papers and, in particular, by initiating platforms for discussion between School alumni and political parties. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, online roundtables and weekly webinars were set up to maintain this space of discussion between political parties and alumni. Further reflections on the effectiveness of the Schools as a tool implemented across DfS countries are provided later in this report.

Analysis

The comparative analysis of the different experiences in DfS countries with regard to the facilitation of dialogue between political parties can help draw conclusions on the results achieved by the programme, as well as the enabling and inhibiting factors for achievement. This can be useful for learning and future planning purposes. An overview is presented in the following table, with reference to the specific programme countries.

Table 3.1 **Overview of reported results, inhibiting and enabling factors**

Reported results of facilitation of intraparty dialogue	Enabling factors	Inhibiting factors	Conditions for effectiveness/long-term impact
Acquaintance with representatives of other parties (BI, TU, CO)	Inclusivity (i.e. involving both ruling party and opposition) (CO, BI)	Lack of interest and/or will by the ruling party to attend meetings (BI)	Continued interaction and dialogue also outside the platform (if a formal platform exists)

Adoption of policies supported by NIMD by Parliament/Government

Political acumen and alertness of local implementing partners |
Learning to listen to other perspectives and engaging in debates (BI, TU, CO)	Trust and perception of impartiality (CO, BI)	Business due to electoral period affects attendance to meetings (TU, CO)	
Learning about the benefits of non-violent dialogue (BI, CO)	Using innovative approaches and showcasing international experiences (CO)	With regard to formulation of joint statements: changing positions of party leaders (TU)	
Fostering the formulation of joint statements and policies (TU, CO)	NIMD expertise and active participation to guide debates (CO)	Weak party structures and resistance within parties (TU, BI, UKR)	
Adoptions of Code of Conducts/Relevant legislative acts (BI, TU, CO)	Network of influence with stakeholders (including beyond political parties), informal contacts (BI)	High polarisation around the political agenda (CO)	
Development of policy documents and research papers for learning purposes (TU, CO, UKR)	Long term presence in the country (BI, CO)	Government resistance (JOR)	
		Shrunk (or absence of) democratic space and rule of law (BI)	

The evaluation has found that interventions aimed at facilitating interparty dialogue and inclusive policy development have effectively fostered the establishment of relationships between representatives of opposing parties; promoted conflict mediation and dialogue skills; and promoted

peaceful conflict resolution methods. In some cases, the facilitated dialogues have led to the formulation of joint policy statements, or the adoption of relevant legislative acts, therefore contributing to more inclusive policy development. The production of policy documents and research by NIMD has also been assessed as effective in increasing the knowledge and understanding of key issues by the target groups. Key factors facilitating the effectiveness of these interventions were: the adoption of an inclusive approach, involving both the opposition and the ruling party; the establishment of a network of influence with local stakeholders; peer exchanges and learning about regional and international experiences; and expertise and active participation to the dialogue sessions by NIMD, as well as the organisation's reputation for being a trusted and impartial partner. The latter is also dependent on long-term presence in the country. Inhibiting factors revolve around systemic challenges in the target countries, such as weak party structure and high polarisation around the political agenda; a reduced democratic space; or resistance from the Government. Practical elements were also identified, such as increased business of political parties during electoral periods, which prevents them from attending activities.

Based on this analysis, targeted recommendations for future planning of this type of interventions are presented in chapter 5.

Training and capacity building of political parties[38]

Country overview

In addition to facilitating intraparty dialogue and inclusive policy development, the DfS programme aims to contribute to ensuring legitimate and capable political actors in its programme countries. This mainly consists of training political parties so that their programmatic and organisational capacities are strengthened. Between 2016 and 2019,[39] 170 political parties received training within the framework of DfS[40].

A distinctive element of the **Colombian** approach to capacity building was the willingness to experiment with innovative methods. A particular focus was placed on improving the understanding of transparency in politics and strengthening parties' own transparency. Key flagship initiatives implemented as part of DfS included:

- The development and launch at a multiparty event of the App '**Transparent political organizations: step by step'**, which aims to facilitate the implementation of the Law on Transparency and Information Access. The use of the self-assessment tool included in the App, combined with three workshops with staff, helped the party *Alianza Verde* formulate a plan for improving their transparency. The self-assessment was later carried out by six other political parties as part of workshops on transparency organised by NIMD. The outcome was an agreement amongst participating parties to produce 'transparency improvement plans' building on the recommendations received. Out of these six parties, NIMD Colombia reported that four have continued to improve their information management practices.
- The provision of technical assistance to the Attorney General Office for developing a **tool to evaluate parties/movements compliance with the Law.**
- A **Training in Political Innovation**, which was carried out within the context of a Digital partnership framework with the organisation *SeamOS Democracia*. The training targeted nine young leaders of political parties and focused on enhancing their understanding of the Colombian socio-political context, the role of digital technologies and new democratic participation methods, as well as learn more about inclusive democratic models.

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38 The evaluators note that an assessment of the training carried out as part of the Schools of Democracy curriculum is not presented here for clarity reasons, but rather included in the following section.
39 2019 is the latest Annual report available for the programme.
40 Calculations made based on DfS annual reports and intermediate outcomes result framework.

- **Trainings based on social mapping methodologies**, which were carried out with 186 emerging political candidates and underrepresented groups in Cesar, La Guajira and Cordoba.
- The launch of the initiative **Occupy Politics**, together with the *Corona and Avina Foundations*, and the *Open Policy Extituto*. The initiative provided face-to-face and virtual mentoring to emerging politicians running in the Bogotá City Council election. Eventually, nine out of the 20 candidates supported were elected. The Council is now composed by new, younger members, as well as a higher number of women. Interviewed political actors familiar with the initiative reported they actively followed NIMD in the assistance provided to the Bogotá City Council, as they perceived that the organisation duly considered their individual interests, while at the same time promoting good conditions for pluralism. The interviewees further recognised the City Council's need to enhance its capacities to guarantee political opposition rights and to promote the political participation of marginalised groups. The initiative was therefore received very positively.
- The launch, together with the organisations *Datasketch* and *NEC*, of a **tool** for political actors, decision makers, and the public in general **to visualise political declarations**, with the aim of contributing to transparency, access to information and enhance the understanding of national power dynamics.
- The provision of **technical assistance** to several parties (e.g *Partido Unión Patriótica; Partido Social de Unidad Nacional; Partido Verde; Partido Cambio Radical*, the latter for the first time in Colombia) to support the development of strategic planning processes; of action plans to strengthen their organisational capacities; and in some cases of monitoring tools. Technical assistance was also provided to the FARC-EP leadership, with whom several bilateral meetings were held to design a specific approach for support.

NIMD's work on strengthening political parties in Colombia was well received by the target group. Interviewed political party representatives who benefited from this support indicated that they found in NIMD a valid partner who helped them **improve their practices towards transparency, democratic use of resources, and the inclusion of youth, women and diverse leaders**. An interviewed female representative of one of the parties that received technical assistance and support in strategic planning indicated that, **without NIMD support, her party would be facing significant challenges** both internal and external, as several key themes such as transparency would not have been brought to the forefront. Another interviewee from a different party similarly praised NIMD Colombia for their **rapid, constructive and relevant technical assistance**.

The impact of NIMD's work on party capacity building is also reflected by the improvement in outcome level indicators at the end of the programme. There was an improvement from 57% to 79% in the perception of compliance of parties with rules and regulations; and an incremental improvement from 0 to 0,74 in the knowledge score[41] of new parties / movements that participate in capacity building activities. Nevertheless, the NIMD Colombia office indicates that impact on larger scale remains limited, as it is affected by the structural conditions of the Colombian political system.

Training provided to political parties by BLTP and NIMD in **Burundi** was also assessed as effective by interviewed beneficiaries. Over the course of the five years of DfS implementation, BLTP and NIMD have focused on, progressively: engaging political parties and coalitions in capacity building activities, both in multiparty and individual training sessions promoting peaceful and constructive dialogue; piloting the strategic planning process with the key parties, first during an experience sharing seminar with other NIMD countries such as Mozambique and Uganda, then by adapting the revised and tailored methodology to support parties in the analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, the development of a targeted strategy in response, and the communication and implementation of this strategy within the respective parties.

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[41]   Planning, coordination, control, training, democratic decision-making, transparency, communication, and accountability

Interviewed party leadership figures in Burundi reported that the training provided by NIMD and BLTP on techniques for developing political programmes **helped them better prepare for elections**. The interviewees reported that the training taught them the importance of **assessing the needs of potential voters and prioritising them** so that they can feed in the preparation of their electoral programme/campaign documents. Interviewed beneficiaries also indicated that, despite a climate of restricted political space, **parties have become more aware of their strategic positioning** within the political ecosystem. BLTP's annual reports indicate that the trainings also reportedly provided the only opportunity, in a context of restricted physical and legal space for the opposition, for some of these parties to meet in person. Additionally, the reports indicate that using a **team of trainers composed by members of different parties** was perceived as a positive example of cooperation by the beneficiaries. This was confirmed by interviewed beneficiaries of the trainings.

Nevertheless, outcome indicators on the capacity of political parties all show a decrease from the baseline assessment in their end term measurements.[42] The percentage of key political parties recognised as having a distinctive party profile in the party landscape decreased from 82% to 38%, and the percentage of major political parties with increased scores on political party capacity assessment went from 68% to 54%. Inhibiting factors to the effectiveness of the trainings were identified by BLTP as: the fact that the participants of the trainings were often **regular party members rather than party leaders**, which affected the degree of transferability of the skills acquired; challenges in ensuring **buy-in and participation to activities** by the ruling party; and, in particular, the **closed political space** for the opposition. In this regard, the DfS Programme Manager for Burundi noted that, although improvements at organisational level were made for some parties through the trainings provided, the restricted political space, especially preceding elections, prevented a better functioning of parties in practice. Additionally, it is important to note that the suspension of BLTP's activities from December 2019 to March 2020 affected the possibility of providing additional training in the months preceding the elections, despite the fact that this training had been requested by some parties. Finally, interviewed beneficiaries in Burundi reported that the potential long-term impacts of these trainings were reduced by the fact that they **did not reach the grassroot population.** This, in turn, meant that grassroot voters have limited awareness of the importance of party programmes as a basis for elections, and that voting remains linked to emotional attachment to party leaders.

In **Tunisia**, a **Strategic Planning Tool** training was organised for ten parties (70 participants) to provide technical assistance for strengthening their organisational and programmatic capacities. The recently conducted final evaluation of the Tunisia programme found that, despite positive feedback by programme implementers and participants with regard to the initiative (i.e. it has helped some parties establish capacity development plans and strengthen party management), several challenges outside the scope of influence of NIMD and its implementing partner, the *Centre des Etudes Méditerranéennes et Internationales* (CEMI), impacted the effectiveness of this initiative. These included: the **unavailability** of working groups to attend activities due to the political crisis; the **merging of some parties and disappearance** of others; **weaknesses** in interparty communication and cooperation; lack of **funding**; trained members **leaving** the party; **reluctance** in involving externals in internal party dynamics.

As discussed above, direct training of political parties was not carried out in **Jordan** and **Ukraine**. In Ukraine in particular, this was a result of the little interest showed by both the ruling and the opposition parties in strengthening their organisational development and strategic planning. The Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD), NIMD's partner in the country, still

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42   Annual report Burundi 2020.

contributed to disseminating knowledge with regard to political party functioning via the publication of policy papers on a range of issues, *inter alia* on reforming political party financing; ideologies and legislative positions on political parties; and the role of parties' youth wings in engaging youth in the political life of the country. Considerations on how the training carried out in the context of the Democracy Schools can have contributed to strengthening the capacity of political parties for both Tunisia and Jordan are presented later in this report.

Analysis

The comparative analysis of the different experiences in DfS countries with regard to training and capacity building of political parties can help draw conclusions on the results achieved by the programme, as well as the related enabling and inhibiting factors for achievement. This can be useful for learning and future planning purposes. An overview is presented in the following table, with reference to the specific programme countries.

Table 3.2   Overview of reported results of training and capacity building work

Results of training and capacity building work with political parties	Enabling factors	Inhibiting factors	Conditions for effectiveness/long-term impact
Acknowledgment of the importance of transparent processes by parties (CO)	Election periods can increase demand/opportunities for supporting strategic planning (CO)	Challenges in the establishment of long-term processes in political organisations due to organisational weaknesses (CO)	Appropriate party funding to ensure practical implementation of training content Trained parties continue to exist Trained members do not leave the party Positive structural conditions of political system Commitment from the government and the ruling party
Implementation of action plans (CO, BI)	In countries with strong regional differences, a territorial approach (local, regional, national) can meet the interest and needs of target groups (CO)	Organisational strengthening initiatives are conditioned by political factors, which determine their prioritisation (CO)	
Strengthened organisational capacities (BI, CO)	Perception by target groups that the support takes into account their interests (CO)	Unavailability to attend due to other priorities (campaigning; political crisis, etc) (CO, TU)	
Improved awareness of position in the political ecosystem (BI)	Combination of several methods, e.g. Apps + workshops + technical assistance (CO)	Reluctance to include externals in internal party processes (TU)	
Trainings offer physical opportunity for the opposition to meet (BI)	Qualified trainers composed by members of opposing parties (BI)	Lack of interest by ruling party and opposition in strengthening organisational capacities (UKR)	
		Investment in training wanes after elections (CO)	

Results of training and capacity building work with political parties	Enabling factors	Inhibiting factors	Conditions for effectiveness/long-term impact
		Structural conditions of the political system and culture (CO, BI)	
		Wrong target group (regular party members rather than leaders) attend trainings (BI)	

The evaluation found that activities linked to training and capacity building of political parties have, with some differences between programme countries, effectively strenghtened the organisational capacities of parties. Differences in the level of effectiveness across countries are also dependent on the respective political systems, as systems which remain closed prevent the effective functioning of parties in practice, even if their capacities have been strengthened. Similarly, the trainings can be more effective if they are accompanied by interventions targeting voters and aimed at enhancing their understanding of electoral processes and democratic culture. The trainings were also found to further contribute to improving parties' understanding of their national political system and of their role and positioning in it. Key factors facilitating the effectiveness of these interventions were the employment of qualified trainers, including from opposing parties, and the perception that the support received is targeted and responds to identified needs. Inhibiting factors for effectiveness and sustainability of results can revolve around elements outside the sphere of influence of NIMD, such as: trained members leaving the party; trained parties disappearing or merging as a result of a political crisis; or overall lack of interest from parties to attend trainings and improve their capacities. As was the case with facilitating interparty dialogue, electoral periods can be busy for parties, therefore preventing attendance to trainings. At the same time, demand for training by parties can increase in the run up to elections, with the aim of increasing their winning chances. The challenge therefore is to ensure continued engagement in activities, even after elections.

Based on this analysis, targeted recommendations for future planning of this type of interventions are presented in chapter 5.

Democracy Schools

Country overview

Finally, the DfS programme seeks to contribute towards ensuring that in the targeted countries political practice is informed by democratic values. This is mainly achieved through training (aspiring) politicians in Democracy Schools. Between 2016 and 2019,[43] 2.906 alumni across DfS programme countries successfully graduated.[44]

The DfS country programme in **Jordan** is fully centred around the setting up and the implementation of the Jordanian School of Politics. The aim of the School is to train young Jordanians, both within and outside existing political parties, and provide them with the necessary knowledge and practical skills to better understand the national political context and enable them to pursue the necessary reforms. Alumni include both political and civic actors, with the latest cohort presenting a 30% - 70% balance between these two groups, respectively, according to the interviewed Country Manager (it was 50/50 in 2019).

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[43] 2019 is the latest Annual report available for the programme.

[44] Calculation made based on DfS annual reports and intermediate outcomes result framework.

The School's curriculum foresees the implementation of training cycles across four governorates in the country (Amman, Zarqa, Irbid and Karak), with both a knowledge and a skills component. According to the interviewed Country Manager of the Jordanian programme, the knowledge component had to be significantly watered-down during implementation at the request of MoPPA in order to remove critical elements related to democracy and politics.

The interviewed Country Manager highlighted as a key distinguishing element of the School's curriculum the high level of **interactivity**: according to the interviewee, engagement through homework and simulation exercises contributed to maintaining a high level of interest amongst participants. Similarly, roleplays were found to be useful to mitigate the perceived differences in knowledge of politics amongst participants with different backgrounds (political/non-political; activist/non-activist). The added value of the School in the country context compared to the support provided by other organisations in the field of democratic development, according to the interviewee, is provided by the fact that NIMD **focuses on youth that have had limited opportunities to take part in similar activities**. This was also considered to be a way to contribute to filling the identified gap between the youth in the capital and those in the regions[45]. Steps towards further reducing this gap were made in 2019 with the establishment, alongside regular School activities, of a dedicated programme implemented jointly with the Ministry of Youth. The programme targeted 200 participants across the 12 Jordanian governorates for 12 two-day training workshops on political theory and debate. The expanded geographical scope allowed NIMD even more to include in the programme youth that does not usually take part to similar trainings.

The Jordanian programme is more recent compared to the other DfS country programmes. Therefore, assessment on impact of the activities is not yet possible, also due to the long-term nature required by this type of interventions for obtaining visible results. Nevertheless, some positive effects generated by the implementation of the School are already identifiable.

The end term indicator measurement[46] for School alumni who report to be implementing in their daily life the skills acquired through training shows progress, with an increase from 0[47] to 61%. Interviewed beneficiaries in Jordan confirmed this, indicating that the programme has helped them **build their knowledge of political systems and political culture; strengthen their advocacy, problem-solving and policy skills**; and **allowed them to learn from international experiences** through the regional exchanges with the Tunisian School of Politics and a visit to the Netherlands.[48] The interviewees also stated that they are working to pass on their acquired knowledge and skills to their colleagues. However, they also highlighted that the experts providing the trainings were sometimes perceived as not fully qualified, nor respectful of different political opinions. NIMD Jordan annual reports confirm that the training curriculum and choice of trainers was **progressively informed by the feedback** collected at the end of the training cycles, and benefited from consultation and collaboration with CEMI and NIMD The Hague. The interviewed Country Manager further confirmed that participants had gained a better understanding of the 'instrumentality' of politics, e.g. with regard to the use of policy papers to advance one's position. In 2020, six policy papers prepared by the 2019 and 2020 alumni and focusing on, *inter alia*, themes such as decentralisation, youth in political party leadership, and party efficiency, were selected by a panel of judges and published in a booklet. The aim is for the booklet to be used to raise awareness on these topics and advocate for reform in these key areas.

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[45]   Baseline report 2016
[46]   Annual report Jordan 2020
[47]   No School existed at baseline.
[48]   As part of the pilot for the MENA region. The pilot consisted of a series of regional exchanges between the Tunisian and Jordanian School of Politics alumni, with meetings taking place in Amman and Tunis, and a joint exchange visit to the Netherlands.

According to interviewed beneficiaries and representatives of other development organisations in Jordan, the impact of the Jordanian School of Politics is significantly **limited by structural challenges in the country**. The information gathered from the focus groups conducted with beneficiaries, development partners and external stakeholders paints the picture of a Jordanian youth which remains unconvinced of the effectiveness of the role of political parties[49] and, on the contrary, continues to perceive them as operating according to the personal interests of their leaders.[50] Additionally, interviewees reported that while the target group of the intervention was appropriate, for sustainability of results and actual contribution to a change of the political culture, a longer timeframe for implementation, together with parallel work on social and economic development reforms at system level are necessary. Interviewed development partners indicated that NIMD would have benefited from stronger local partnerships in order to address these issues in a more comprehensive manner. Finally, interviewees also indicated that, as the media in Jordan has a major role in influencing results at larger societal level, a stronger media plan could have contributed to disseminating more broadly the results of the programme.

Similar to Jordan, NIMD's main intervention in **Ukraine** were also Democracy Schools. The programme focused its efforts on establishin and running the Schools as it became evident that direct work with political parties was not possible. Between 2016 – 2020, five Schools were established across the country, in L'viv, Odessa, Poltava, Kyiv and Dnipro. The Ukrainian Democracy Schools present two distinguishing features: first, the Schools' target group is significantly broader than usual, as it includes, in addition to representatives of political parties, journalists, non-governmental organisations and civil society representatives, civil servants, university professors, veterans of the Donbas conflict, and representatives of the Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and ethnic minorities. This is a result of the increasing importance attributed to civil society actors in driving policy reforms in the country, therefore making them a relevant target group; secondly, as a result of the particular context in Ukraine, in addition to the standard curriculum, EECMD developed a special training module focusing exclusively **anti-corruption policies in Ukraine**, with the aim of improving the understanding of the phenomenon and of the related possible policy solutions. These two distinguishing features of the Ukrainian Schools reflect both the importance of tailoring standard tools to the context, but also NIMD and its partners' ability to do so.

Interviewed representatives of EECMD reported that the focus on anti-corruption attracted a large group of civil society actors, and that the Schools have become **platforms for organising discussions and mobilising expertise** around central themes in Ukraine, which has allowed to establish a 'bridge' connecting authorities with citizens on grassroots level. The interviewees indicated that they have witnessed Schools' alumni **become inspired** by attending the classes to enter public service and foster change from the inside. This becomes particularly evident when looking at the outcomes harvested by the programmes, which show, *inter alia,* that a number of alumni autonomously launched projects (e.g. on women empowerment in politics, set up new NGOs, joined forces with the local authorities to support COVID-19 patients), initiated their own thematic lectures (e.g. a course on anti-corruption) or decided to run for local elections. For example, four alumni of the Odessa and Poltava Schools successfully ran in the 2020 Local Elections and became regional deputies; a L'viv Democracy School student was elected deputy of the local district council; and a Kyiv Democracy School student launched a campaign and successfully ran for local elections as a party member.

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[49]   External stakeholders.
[50]   External stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Amongst key enabling factors for the effectiveness of their Democracy Schools, EECMD indicated in annual reports that it is important to include **engagement mechanisms** (e.g. homework, self-recording in case of online sessions, etc) to ensure participants feel motivated throughout the course. This aligns with what has been reported for Jordan, as outlined above. The focus on **smaller groups of alumni** (i.e. 25 per School) also reportedly contributed to better uptake of the information and the values passed through during the trainings. Additionally, and also in line with the Jordanian case, the **collection of feedback from participants and the adjustment of the courses** as a result of the feedback collected have been useful. This has led, for example, to adjusting the target group of the Schools (e.g. in 2018/2019 rather than university students, applicants were drawn more consistently from a pool of political parties' members, decision makers and representatives of local self-governments) and the schedule of the courses; recruiting more qualified trainers; adjusting curriculum material to reflect ongoing context developments (e.g. including sessions on COVID-19). This was confirmed in the interviews with EECMD representatives, who reported that during the pandemic several additional meetings were set up online to ensure continued interest in the Schools activities. Focus was devoted to key emerging topics during this period, e.g. the lockdowns and gender-based violence. Finally, the interviewees stressed the importance of ensuring **during pre-selection processes** that candidates are open-minded, in order to foster constructive interactions during classes.

In **Colombia,** five face-to-face Democracy Schools were set up between 2016 – 2020[51], of which two with a thematic focus on women and youth, respectively. Four virtual schools were set up in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The non-thematic Schools target young adults (between 20 – 40 years of age) among leaders of political parties and civil society organisations. Two Schools were set up in cities located in heavily conflict-afflicted regions. Lessons learned in the implementation of these Schools highlighted the importance of having **a thorough understanding of the implementation context and of building trust** with local organisations in order to offer the most relevant curriculum. Mediation techniques, for example, were deemed by the NIMD Colombia office to be a particularly useful training component in these contexts. The successful implementation of these two regional Schools was built upon under the framework of a EU-funded project, which saw the implementation of Schools in six other conflict afflicted regions. According to NIMD Colombia, the regional Schools allowed for the establishment of **strategic partnerships** in these particularly fragile settings, fostering multistakeholder interactions. Over the course of the implementation of DfS, the NIMD Colombia office also invested in building a network of Schools alumni by fostering interaction on social channels, including by creating an Online Alumni Network, regularly inviting alumni to NIMD events, and involving them in activities related to its innovation efforts.

Overall, the Schools implemented in Colombia seem to have contributed to increasing participants' knowledge of the political and electoral system; improving their critical thinking and dialogue skills, and expanding their political and social networks. This was highlighted by interviewed beneficiaries of the Schools. Additionally, the Schools' curricula and target group have been praised by an interviewed representative of the Election Observation Mission (MOE, a platform of civil society representatives promoting civic and political rights), who has highlighted their potential for strengthening the civic fabric of the country.

As with the other examples outlined above, end of term indicator measurements show an increase in the percentage of alumni (from 0 to 84%[52]) reporting that they apply in their daily life the values learned in the Schools. This points to the positive contribution of the Schools towards enhancing the democratic values of political actors in Colombia.

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[51]   Bogotá, Florencia (Caquetá) and Ibagué (Tolima).
[52]   End of term outcome measurement report Colombia

Interviewed alumni in the context of the Colombia case study praised the **strong programme design** and the opportunity the Schools provided to meet and discuss different themes with other political/civic actors. One interviewed beneficiary also reported that he is aware that other organisations he interacts with, and whose members have attended the Schools' classes, are able to transfer the skills acquired to their own territories and apply them in practice. NIMD's proactive attitude in proposing new and **innovative ways of learning**, as well as the support provided in **follow up** to the classes, were also appreciated.

Amongst DfS programme countries, only two had a Democracy Schools programme already running when DfS began to be implemented: Tunisia and Burundi.

The **Tunisia School of Politics (TSoP)** was established in 2012. Under DfS the programme expanded to include activities to improve multiparty dialogue and strengthen political parties, as already outlined in the previous sections. School activities carried out as part of DfS included:
- A **course on the basics of politics**, rule of law, decentralisation, participatory democracy, etc., as well as on Tunisian national politics, targeting 45 participants from 10 political parties per year. The course was complemented by a series of debate sessions where participants from opposing parties discussed selected topics. Alumni who graduated from the first level class had the opportunity to follow-up by attending a more-in depth, second level class, on public policy and policy drafting. The second level class was supported with funding from the Dutch embassy.
- **Alumni Autumn/Summer Academies**, which focused each year on different thematic areas (e.g. being a candidate for Municipal Elections, or in Parliamentary elections). The seasonal academies provided opportunities for dialogue with experts working both in the private and the public sector.
- **International peer exchanges**, which involved one participant per represented party in the School travelling to the Hague to gain exposure to the Dutch political landscape; Regional seminars with representatives of other countries in the MENA region were also organised.
- Alumni '**Couscous Politiques**', i.e. thematic debates where alumni and representatives of the government discussed specific topics.
- **Public debates between political and civic actors** revolving around topics broached during School classes, with the aim of facilitating the connection between alumni and civil society actors.

From 2019 onwards, the following specific classes were also included:
- A **training of trainers** (ToT) class, with the aim of strengthening participants' skills-transfer methods.
- A class for **Executive Bureau Members** (EBM), targeting party representatives of ages 35 and up, aiming to strengthen policy design and drafting skills, political communication, crisis and change management.
- A **Parliamentary Academy**, with training sessions aimed at supporting Members of Parliament in law drafting and amending. The trainings also supported the review of the 2020 finance bill.

The recent final evaluation of the Tunisian programme reports the promising results obtained by the School. The 2018 Municipal Elections saw 61 alumni out of 400 running as candidates, out of which 27 got elected; in the Parliamentary elections of 2019, 20 political parties included alumni in their lists, and one presidential candidate was also a TSoP graduate. Currently, 54 out of the 217 members of the Tunisian Parliament have participated in some form of TSoP activities; 40 of them have participated in at least one of the school's classes. Amongst the alumni elected as MPs, those interviewed in the context of the TSoP final evaluation indicated that **participating to the School**

strengthened their election campaigns. Overall, participants reported having a **better understanding of politics** – both in general and in relation to the Tunisian context; **strengthened soft skills**; and **increased interaction** across party lines and with civil society.

The Schools Executive Director and Tunisia Country Manager interviewed in the context of this final DfS evaluation indicated that the results of the programme are attributable to a **strong curriculum implemented by expert trainers**, which is attractive as it offers the opportunity to strengthen skills that can allow participants to move up the career ladder; to the **continuity** offered by a one-year training programme, rather than the one-time trainings offered by other organisations; to the opportunity the programme provides to establish a space for **dialogue**; and to the overall **trust** in CEMI as an expert, impartial actor.

In addition to these enabling factors for effectiveness, some inhibiting factors also emerged as part of the TSoP final evaluation: some of the interviewed participants reported that the trainings remained **too theoretical**, and detached to the grassroot realities; additionally, **more follow-up** was deemed necessary to support the application in practice of the skills and knowledge gained. Some of the participants also indicated that the **large size of groups and the diversity of backgrounds** had an impact on effectiveness.

Finally, as for Tunisia, Democracy Schools have been implemented in **Burundi** since before the start of the DfS programme, specifically since 2011, but were brought under DfS financing in 2018. Under DfS, the number of Schools increased from six to eight. Schools are implemented at the local level, in provinces, and due to the particular configuration of the Burundi context, they target stakeholders from the security sector such as police officers in addition to community leaders and members of political parties. The aim is to further contribute to improving trust between the communities and the local police.

The distinguishing feature of the Burundi Democracy Schools is the focus on '**democratic development catalysts**', i.e. promising alumni who can drive political change. Schools' activities implemented with DfS funding have primarily focused on fostering moments of exchange between alumni – and catalysts in particular - and party leaders at the communal level. The aim was to explore ways of cooperating to further strengthen democracy in the respective communities; to enhance knowledge of local governance and security; and, through interprovincial exchange visits, to learn about others' experiences in dealing with local governance challenges. According to the Burundi annual report for 2020, the exchange sessions and thematic seminars helped participants improve their understanding of the political ecosystem and the role of political parties. Interviews carried out with School alumni further confirmed that the training received helped them become **better acquainted with the values of social cohesion**, **non-violent communication**, and **peaceful cohabitation**. One interviewed provincial governor indicated that there was evidence that trained youth affiliated to different political parties was starting to build social cohesion outside of the party framework. According to the interviewee, common interests amongst trained youth began to emerge, hence reducing the animosity that used to characterise their interactions. This confirms the positive contribution of the Schools towards a political culture that is more receptive to democratic values.

Analysis

The comparative analysis of the different experiences in DfS countries with the implementation of the Democracy Schools can help draw conclusions on the results achieved by the programme, and the related enabling and inhibiting factors for achievement. This can be useful for learning and future planning purposes. An overview is presented in the following table, with reference to the specific programme countries.

Table 3.3   **Overview of results of implementation of Democracy Schools in DfS countries**

Results of implementation of Democracy Schools	Enabling factors	Inhibiting factors	Conditions for effectiveness/long-term impact
Improved understanding of country political context (TU, JOR, CO)	Engaging with participants and requiring them to deliver work (JOR, UKR, TU)	Poor quality of trainers (JOR, UKR)	
Improved understanding of political ecosystem and role played by political parties (BI)	Identification and reliance on democratic development catalysts (BI)	Reduced space for practical application of skills acquired (BI)	
Strengthening of soft skills, comradery between participants (TU, JOR, CO)	Broadened target group (UKR, BI) Continuity of training (TU)	Big size of group and heterogeneity of participants (TU)	
Increased cross-party interaction and with other civil society actors, expansion of network (TU, CO)	Collection and use of participants' feedback to shape curriculum (JOR, UKR, TU)	Training is too theoretical and weakly linked to grassroot realities (TU)	
Initiative taken by alumni to start own projects/ creation of community of alumni (UKR, BI)	Preselection of candidates open to dialogue and debate (UKR)	Lack of follow-up activities to support practical application of knowledge (TU)	Impact accrues over time therefore follow up and monitoring is necessary
Improved trust in political leadership of rival parties (UKR)	Small groups allow for stronger internalisation of training (UKR)	Limited publicity of new initiative can affect quality of applicant pool (UKR)	Monitoring and adjustment to context developments to ensure relevance of training
Successfully running in elections (TU, UKR)	Engagement approaches and role play to limit effect of variation in background knowledge of participants (JOR)	Near-holidays and university exams periods should be avoided (JOR)	Working in conflict areas demands trust building exercise with local actors
	Where multiple regional schools are present, national events grouping all schools are useful for networking (JOR)	Lack of an appropriate media/communication plan (JOR)	
	Regional/interprovincial exchange programmes and visits (JOR, TU, BI)		
	Strict selection process to avoid irrelevant participants/training shoppers (JOR)		
	Combination of trainers with diverse expertise		

Results of implementation of Democracy Schools	Enabling factors	Inhibiting factors	Conditions for effectiveness/long-term impact
	and backgrounds (local, national, special guests) (CO)		

The evaluation has found that the Democracy Schools have effectively enhanced participants' understanding and knowledge of the political system, including their national system; strengthened soft skills and transmitted the values of dialogue and peaceful coexistence; and fostered interaction across party lines, as well as with other relevant actors in the political ecosystem, e.g. civic actors. In some cases, the Schools have led to the establishment of groups of alumni who take the lead in the implementation of own projects and activities; in others, alumni have felt encouraged and enabled to run in local or national elections, often succesfully. Key factors facilitating the effectiveness of the Schools were: the strong engagement of alumni trough homework and assignments, as well as through dedicated follow-up activities; using expert trainers to deliver classes, noting that classes which were linked to the practical issues affecting the countries were better received; and the adjustment of the curricula as a result of participants feedback. Smaller groups were found to be more prone to internalising the trainings received, and therefore more likely to replicate them in their daily life. The comparative analysis between DfS programme countries also shows the importance of tailoring the standard School curriculum to the local context to ensure relevance and added value, something which has been done very well within DfS.

Based on this analysis, targeted recommendations for future planning of this type of interventions are presented in chapter 5.

Plausibility of the contribution relationship between programme interventions and outcomes
In order to assess the contribution relationship between the reported outcomes and the interventions, i.e. the attributability of results to NIMD, three national consultants conducted a contribution analysis for the three case study countries (Burundi, Colombia and Jordan) against a sample of selected outcomes. The results of the analyses are presented below.

The substantiation and contribution analysis exercises in **Colombia** were carried out for three outcomes.

1. A more open and inclusive political system that contributes to stability (system)

This outcome has been assessed as partially achieved. The end of term outcome measurements for the two indicators used to assess progress (i.e. the number of policies supported by NIMD that make the political system more open and inclusive; and the number of relevant leaders of political parties, government agencies and/or civil society organizations attending inter-party dialogue events organized or supported by NIMD) show improvements in both cases, with an increase from 0 to 3 and from 63 to 237, respectively.[53]

NIMD's contribution to key policies that supported inclusivity was evidenced by the input provided to discussions on the reform of the Electoral Code on the need to include regulations that could enhance the political participation and representation of women; the recommendations on the drafting of a Bill aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women in politics; and the

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[53] The measurement of this indicator has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as there was not detailed registration of attendance to online events. The measurement was made based on comments registered on the platforms used to implement the events.

technical assistance to the National Electoral Council on document management for transparency purposes, which resulted in the adoption of a circular by the Council. With regard to the results measured by the second indicator, it is important to note that 58.6% of the relevant leaders identified as attending these events were women, an increase from the 30% measured at mid-term level.

Interviewed beneficiaries and other development partners confirmed that, to the extent allowed by the complex context, progress has been made towards improved conditions for dialogue and the inclusion and participation of new or underrepresented actors in the system. The contribution of NIMD was confirmed in relation to its proactive and positive role in promoting dialogue between opposed political actors, as well as on sensitive issues. According to interviewed development actors, NIMD's assistance with regard to political/electoral reforms is a sector reference both for the themes approached as well as for the way the assistance is provided. Finally, NIMD's contribution has been assessed by interviewees as distinctive from that of other organisations thanks to its multiparty approach and the promotion of interaction between civil society and political parties.

2. Responsive and capable political parties (actor);

This outcome has been assessed as partially achieved. Out of the three indicators used to measure progress against this outcome, two show a positive trend of improvement: the knowledge scores of new political parties/movements that participate in capacity building activities, which went from 0[54] to 0,74[55]; and the percentage of perceived compliance of political parties with rules and regulations, which went from 57% to 79%. On the other hand, the average capacity index score of political parties' capabilities and responsiveness to the general public, which measures the average number of rules, mechanisms and policies implemented by political parties in planning, coordination, control, training, democratic decision-making, transparency, and communication, decreased from 81% to 76%.

Interviewed stakeholders confirmed that political parties have gained from the support received. NIMD capacity building and support was indicated as a key contributing factor for the improvement of outreach skills of political parties, and the strengthening of their ability to communicate with other parties and institutions.

3. Enhanced democratic values of political actors (culture);

This outcome has been assessed as achieved. The end term measurements of the two indicators used to assess progress towards this outcome (i.e. the percentage of perceived democratic values in political encounters and the percentage of alumni of the Democracy Schools that incorporate the contents of the trainings in their daily life) show a positive increase, going respectively from 68% to 92% and from 0[56] to 81%.

Interviewed stakeholders confirmed that, both at system and culture level, the democratic values of political actors were enhanced, especially those related to: dialogue among opposed actors; accountability; and the inclusion and participation of marginalised groups. Interviewed stakeholders who were not strictly familiar with DfS and this specific outcome still confirmed its relevance, and indicated that NIMD has played a significant role in enhancing the democratic values of political actors in Colombia through its work. All interviewees acknowledged that NIMD has managed to position itself as a credible and trustworthy actor with technical expertise and context knowledge,

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[54] The knowledge score instrument was not yet applied.
[55] The capacity survey was applied to the FARC-EP party.
[56] No School implemented

recognised by key government bodies, electoral authorities, political parties, civil society organizations and international agencies in the country. The work carried out in the context of the Democracy Schools was identified as contributing to the improvement of trust between rivals, increasing tolerance and acceptance, as well as willingness to use dialogue. Interviewed beneficiaries further confirmed that, as a result of the training, party representatives are better able to form strategic alliances and interact with institutions, and to deal with critical issues without ruptures.

In **Jordan**, the analysis also focused on three outcomes.

1. The legislative framework for Jordan's political system, including the political parties' law, the decentralization law and the electoral law facilitates a fully-fledged and functional multiparty democracy and guarantees fair political representation of all groups in society including youth, women, minorities and marginalised groups (system)

This outcome, which was later re-formulated to 'The political system is more conducive to political parties and guarantees fair representation of all groups in society including youth, women, minorities and marginalised groups', has not been realised. As outlined in previous sections of this report, work at system and actor level was prevented by resistance from the Jordanian government. The indicator used to measure the achievement of this outcome is the 'number of national level policies / legislative provisions that have been proposed with the aim to make the political system more open and/or inclusive'. There have been no changes to this outcome throughout the implementation of the programme. On the contrary, NIMD Jordan indicates in its end of programme outcome measurement report that the results obtained regarding the three legislative proposals indicated in the baseline measurement[57] were considered to be "disappointing" by local actors and stakeholders. For example, the report indicates that the political parties' bylaw led parties to run a high number of candidates, but with no proper agenda or electoral programmes. This resulted in less than 14% seats in Parliament.

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the analysis confirmed that the political system in Jordan has not become more conducive to political parties throughout DfS implementation. Additionally, the restrictions imposed by the government, together with the short timeframe of implementation of DfS in Jordan, prevent from identifying any direct contribution towards the achievement of this outcome.

2. Different political actors can form strong coalitions for legal reforms that increase the political participation (system).

This outcome has been assessed as not realised, also due to the limitations imposed on working with political parties. Indicators measuring the achievement of this outcome are: the number of coalitions for legal reforms, and the number of proposed reforms. The latter is the same indicator used for the outcome discussed above. With regard to the number of coalitions, the end term value shows a decrease from four to one active coalition (the coalition of National and Left Parties). The coalition ran for the 2020 Parliamentary elections and achieved no seats. The end term measurement results therefore show limited progress towards this outcome, also due to the structural challenges in the country.

Discussions with the NIMD Country Manager led to the agreement that, for the purposes of the substantiation and contribution analysis with external stakeholders, the outcome statement to be taken as reference would be 'Youth can form strong coalitions for legal reforms that increases the political participation which promotes more inclusive and participatory democracy'. This was

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[57] The law on political parties and party financing bylaw; the decentralisation law; and the parliamentary elections law.

deemed to represent a more accurate reflection of NIMD's work in Jordan in this area, and was agreed with NIMD at central level. Interviewed stakeholders confirmed that this outcome has not been realised. Although NIMD's interventions are considered to have contributed to improving the capacity of most of the youth participating to the School, structural deficiencies remain which prevent the achievement of this outcome. Political work is not considered to be a priority for Jordanian youth, for whom the improvement of socio-economic conditions (e.g. finding and securing employment) remains the main goal. There is also no evidence that youth have been able to build strong political alliances yet, although it is to be noted that the targeted results are far-reaching, and could not have been fully achieved in the short period of implementation of DfS in Jordan.

3. The political culture is based on participatory citizenship, inclusiveness and tolerance and political parties engage actively and transparently with society (culture);

This outcome has been assessed as partially achieved. The indicator used to measure the achievement of this outcome is the percentage of alumni of Democracy Schools who incorporate the contents of the training in their daily life. End of term measurements show that the percentage of respondents confirming this has increased from 0 (no School present at deadline) to 61%. NIMD's contribution to the achievement of progress under this outcome is considered to be direct, as a result of the implementation of the Schools.

As for the previous outcome, discussions with the NIMD Country Manager led to the agreement that, for the purposes of the substantiation and contribution analysis with external stakeholders, the outcome statement to be taken as reference would be 'The political culture is based on participatory citizenship, inclusiveness and tolerance'. This was deemed to represent a more accurate reflection of NIMD's work in Jordan in this area, and was agreed with NIMD at central level. Interviewed external stakeholders confirmed progress towards this outcome, and recognised NIMD's contribution to the results achieved, indicating that awareness of political culture of youth improved as a result of participation to the School. Nevertheless, they also indicated that the achievements of the outcomes were limited to the youth participating in the programme, without extending to the rest of the youth in society, therefore affecting potential long-term impact and sustainability of results.[58] One of the factors identified by stakeholders as affecting the spill-over of the achievements to Jordanian society more broadly was the lack of a strong media communication plan. Interviewees indicated that the media has a major role in changing trends and influencing perceptions at a larger societal level in the country. Therefore, a strong media communication and dissemination strategy could contribute to ensuring sustainability of results on the long term.

Finally, three outcomes were also assessed as part of the **Burundi** case study:

1. Shared agenda for steps towards peace and stability developed (system);

This outcome has been assessed as not achieved. This was due to the progressively restricted space for dialogue and interaction between the ruling party and the opposition. The restricted political space both for the opposition and other civil society actors, in particular in the run up to elections, and lack of cooperation by the ruling party have been identified as the main factors hindering the achievement of this outcome.

The end of term measurement of the indicator used to assess progress towards this outcome (i.e. the percentage of key political parties that sign a national programme for peace and stability) shows an increase from 0 to 50%. The end of term measurement report for Burundi indicates that this

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[58]   The evaluators acknowledge that this was not the target of the intervention.

percentage is an estimate made on the basis of commitments between political actors, rather than on the existence of a shared agenda, since this was not the case. Such commitments include, for example, the signing of a roadmap for the 2020 elections by all political parties; the Resolution of the leaders of political parties, signed in Ngozi in July 2020, whereby parties committed to regular meetings; the commitment to the constitutional referendum; and the Code of Conduct for Elections. However, it should be noted that, according to interviewees, commitments towards regular meetings of ruling party and opposition have reportedly remained on paper. BLTP's contribution in terms of progress towards the achievement of results related to this outcome has been partially confirmed by interviewed stakeholders, who refer to them as the most experienced organisation on the ground specialised in the field of parties. Additionally, interviewees indicated that BLTP's contribution is more easily identifiable, as several other CSOs and foreign NGOs did not have access to the field following the 2015 crisis.

2. Improved *organizational* capacity of political actors in fragile settings to effectively and legitimately participate in political (dialogue) processes (actor);

This outcome has been assessed as realised to a limited extent. The end of term measurement of the indicator used to assess progress (i.e. the percentage of major political parties with increased scores on political party capacity assessment) shows a minor decrease from 0,68 to 0,54. The sample of parties assessed at end term included the 13 actors who participated in the 2020 elections, against the baseline sample of 10 parties originally targeted by DfS. According to BLTP, the decrease is attributable to the fact that most of the 13 parties which participated to the 2020 elections did not benefit from BLTP's training; as well as to the increasingly restricted space for the opposition to operate and physically meet in the run-up to elections. BLTP's assessment overall is that political parties, at the end of DfS, remain weak actors.

Interviewed stakeholders indicate that, to some extent, the organisational capacities of parties have improved. However, the restricted political space impacts their functioning in practice, therefore making these improvements less visible. Nevertheless, the contribution of BLTP to progress in this area is recognised, as the organisation is acknowledged as the main provider of capacity building to political parties.

3. Improved *programmatic* capacity of political actors in fragile settings to effectively and legitimately participate in political (dialogue) processes (actor);

This outcome has been assessed as realised to a limited extent. The end of term measurement of the indicator used to assess progress (i.e. the percentage of key political parties recognised as having a distinctive party profile in the party landscape) indicates a decrease from 82 (9 out of 11 parties) to 38.5% (5 out of 13). According to BLTP, the decrease is partly attributable to the fact that the end term measurement relies on the assessment of an external consultant, rather than on self-declarations of parties, which was the case for the baseline measurement.

Interviewed stakeholders in Burundi reported that the contribution of BLTP to the capacity building of political parties in the elaboration of programmes can be confirmed. Amongst the five parties participating to the 2020 elections with a recognised programme, four had been trained by BLTP in 2015 on how to develop and disseminate a political programme. As also confirmed by BLTP, although this training was requested again in the run-up to the 2020 elections, the suspension of BLTP's activities prevented the training from taking place. In addition to the challenges at system level which impact the effectiveness of BLTP's work, interviewed stakeholders also noted that impact, especially in the long term, remains limited due to the fact that the training does not reach

voters (in particular in the communes and rural areas), whose understanding of the usefulness of political programmes remains limited and therefore does not influence their voting practices.[59]

Effectiveness of DfS programme interventions in FCAS

In addition to the findings presented in the previous section with regard to the effectiveness of NIMD's interventions in the DfS programme, some additional considerations can be made with regard to the lessons learned from operating in FCAS.

The work carried out by NIMD in FCAS in the context of DfS offers grounds for learning for the organisation on how effective its approach to democracy building is in these contexts. On the one hand, the evaluation finds that, as outlined above, working in such volatile contexts requires flexibility to quickly adapt interventions in response to contextual changes. In this sense, the DfS programme has been **particularly effective in adapting its interventions** to the changing context and to events outside its sphere of influence, so as to avoid halting of activities and continue implementing interventions in a way that remained relevant to the country context and that could still contribute to achieving results. This is visible, for example, in the case of Jordan, where the resistance of the government to system and actor level work led NIMD to abandon these areas and re-direct efforts to culture level interventions; and Ukraine, where actor level work was also abandoned due to the unfavourable political party system. Similarly, although work at system level in both Burundi and Colombia became increasingly difficult over time and against initial expectations (space for dialogue and opposition remained constricted rather than progressively opening up and the implementation of the Peace Agreement did not proceed as foreseen, respectively), NIMD has been able to adjust to the context and in both cases continue to preserve a (albeit limited in the case of Burundi) space for dialogue through its interventions. The importance of being flexible in adapting the foreseen approach, the activities and their calendar was further noticed in the context of Burundi, where BLTP reported that working with political parties in nascent democracies and post-conflict situations remains a sensitive area that demands this type of flexibility for interventions to be successful.[60]

The DfS programme has also generated specific insights on what works and what does not in FCAS. Key examples taken from country experiences and which can lead to more general reflections are presented below:

- NIMD country offices and local partners are **well embedded in the local context**. This has emerged as an important facilitator, in particular with regard to implementing more 'sensitive' work at system level. A track-record of long-term presence in the country by NIMD or by the local partners can help achieve the level of trust and influence necessary for furthering more high-level type of interventions. According to interviewed BLTP representatives, connections not only with key government stakeholders, but also with representatives of civil society and religious leaders, have been particularly important in the case of BurundI for allowing NIMD and BLTP to be aware of the environment and possible obstacles, and change the course of interventions accordingly.
- As interventions in these contexts are complex and require the combination of ongoing contextual analysis and related adjustments, as well as the constant monitoring of local, national and international policy dynamics, the need to **establish a network of influence with key programme stakeholders** has also been reported. In Burundi, the designation of focal points for interaction within the Ministry of Interior and the main political parties have reportedly contributed to raising awareness of DfS interventions and to creating a useful bridge for

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[59]   The evaluators acknowledge that this was not the target of the intervention.
[60]   Annual report 2020 Burundi.

- interaction between BLTP and political party leaders.[61] Such network of influence can be useful to ensure continuation of activities even in the face of context challenges.
- In terms of type of interventions, **work at system and actor level** (in particular dialogue platforms and capacity building activities for political parties) is the **most vulnerable to the political context**. This is not only in case of resistance to more high-level type of activities by the government, such as was the case of Jordan, as outlined above, but also in the case of political crises. This was visible, for example in Tunisia and Colombia. In Tunisia, the Parliament's no-confidence vote to the then-Prime Minister in 2017 and subsequent need to form a new unity government suddenly filled the agendas of political parties' leadership, which were then able to focus less on DfS programme activities. This, in turn, had an impact both on the multiparty dialogue platform as well as the strategic planning training of parties, which was briefly stalled[62]. The Colombia NIMD country office similarly reported impact on activities by electoral cycles. They indicated that capacity building and technical assistance to political parties is impossible to carry out during these times, as they require a level of commitment that cannot be fulfilled since all resources are focused on campaigning[63]. Lessons learned from the implementation of DfS in Jordan further stress the importance of planning around election cycles also for leveraging the moment to promote NIMD's work. For example, in the context of the 2020 parliamentary elections, NIMD Jordan focused on promoting electoral participation, including by creating three communication campaigns. The campaigns contributed to raising awareness about NIMD's work (which resulted in an increased number of followers on social media) but also reportedly enhanced the interest of youth and women to participate in the dedicated training programmes.[64] Elections also offer a useful moment for reflecting on whether interventions are targeting the most appropriate group, and for readjusting them if needed. This was the case of Tunisia, for example, where the interviewed DfS Programme Manager reported that the Presidential elections of 2019 showed the success of candidates without political parties and of relying on an electoral base of youth who had never participated to elections before. This led CEMI and NIMD to adjust their interventions to target non-traditional political actors as well as youth newer to the scene, in addition to the establishment already targeted by the existing programme. Although this is not relevant for DfS, it forms part of NIMD future programming in the country as part of PoD.
- The **effectiveness of work at actor level** (i.e. capacity building of parties) can also be **determined by the openness of the political context**. For example, in Burundi, although training of political parties has contributed to strengthening the internal organisation of some of them, the reduced political space does not allow for effective functioning of these parties in practice[65].

These insights have been collected and compiled by the evaluators through an assessment of the country annual reports for each DfS country for all years of programme implementation, as well as through insights received in interviews with local country staff and stakeholders. However, they seem to have remained tied to the local country context and do not appear to have contributed to additional learning and informing of planning for NIMD as an organisation. The annual reports also give the impression that more reflection could be incorporated on the challenges faced and lessons learned specifically as a result of implementation in FCAS, in order to better document the rationale behind the changes and learn from the experience. This is in line with the findings of this evaluation in the context of adaptive programming (see section 3.4.2 of this report) and the requests from the MFA (DSH) to present more systematically reflections on successes and failures (see section 3.6.2

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[61]   Annual report Burundi 2018.
[62]   Annual report 2016 Tunisia; Annual programme report DfS 2016.
[63]   Annual report 2019 Colombia.
[64]   Annual report 2020 Jordan.
[65]   End of programme Outcome Measurement report 2020 Burundi, comment by Programme Manager.

of this report). Recommendations on how to better capitalise on this existing knowledge base on working in FCAS are presented in chapter 5.

Integration of gender aspects in DfS interventions

Across the three levels underpinning the DfS programme, NIMD also introduced diversity, inclusiveness and innovation as cross-cutting concepts to be mainstreamed and incorporated into programme activities. As a result of NIMD's increasing attention to gender, inclusivity and women participation, this evaluation has also looked at how gender-specific elements have been included in DfS interventions.

Findings show that NIMD's work on gender does not benefit from a standardised approach. Despite documented agreement,[66] confirmed also by interviewed DfS programme managers, that gender activities are most successful when they include a combination of mainstreaming activities as well as a specific focus area of intervention, only a few countries in DfS seem to have adopted this approach in a meaningful manner. The evaluators assess that this can be attributed to the strong gender and inclusion background of staff involved in the design and implementation of a country programme. This has also been confirmed by one interviewed DfS programme manager. The focus group discussions with the country programme managers also highlighted that, despite a manifested desire to use DfS to do meaningful work on gender, this has not translated to actual, systematised efforts across programme countries. The level of particular focus on gender was attributed by one interviewee to individual Programme Managers' interest in the topic.

From a process and monitoring perspective, issues also seem to exist with regard to collecting indicators on gender-related interventions. Interviewed NIMD central level staff also indicated that there is a high risk that gender results, especially when gender is mainstreamed across broader programmes, e.g. the Democracy Schools, are given less visibility. This reportedly is particularly the case for culture and system level type of activities. The lack of a standardised way of collecting data against gender indicators also for programmes that continue DfS activities but are funded by non-Dutch donors (and therefore use different log frames) can lead to losing significant results. The collection of gender-disaggregated data has also not been done in a consistent manner across DfS, although more focus on this is visible in country annual reports for the last two years of the programme (2019 and 2020).

Interviews conducted at country level as well as the desk review of the annual reports confirm that, although there is overall attention across country programmes to the inclusion of gender quotas for participation in Democracy Schools, including in the curricula gender and inclusivity aspects, and highlighting women success stories, additional steps need to be taken to ensure meaningful (i.e. impactful) participation of women to activities. There is also limited evidence of conscious reflections taking place at country level with regard to enabling or inhibiting factors for engaging women in FCAS in particular, both from the annual country reports and from the interviews held with beneficiaries and programme managers at country level. Programme managers at country level for all countries, when asked about gender-related impact of the interventions implemented also generally referred to the quotas and curricula of the Democracy Schools, confirming the impression that gender activities have remained 'lodged' at that level in most cases.

In **Tunisia**, activities implemented under the TSoP adopt a gender quota of 50% female participants. However, gender disaggregated data for 2020 activities shows that, in the case of the MPD meetings and the ToT course, the balance is more skewed towards 60% male 40% female participants. Gender trainings form part of the School's curriculum, with the aim of increasing participants' knowledge on concepts related to, *inter alia*, the economic and social rights of women,

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[66]   NIMD, Mind the Gap

the prevention of discrimination, and gender dimension in policy making. Participants to these trainings interviewed as part of the final TSoP evaluation indicated that the classes had both improved their understanding of these topics as well as provided them with the confidence to promote them in their own parties. However, they recommended introducing success stories from practitioners as well as making the trainings more practical. The interviewed Executive Director of the TSoP indicated that one of the key achievements of the programme with regard to gender was that several participants of the training had actively advocated for the adoption of law on combating violence against women, both in Parliament and civil society.

In **Jordan** too, gender balance is taken into account mainly in the selection of participants to the Jordanian School of Politics (50% male and 50% female[67]), as well as integrated in training sessions and, at times, in dedicated dialogue sessions. Overall, all annual reports indicate that gender was mainstreamed across the programme, and there were no specific interventions targeting women as political actors. Gender disaggregated data for activities is (partly) provided only in the annual report for 2018.[68] The 2019 annual report provides more information on the thematic activities implemented, which included: a presentation and discussion around issues of women in political parties and quotas in election, which formed 25% of the total of a workshop on political parties and electoral systems; the presentation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as a case study in a workshop on constitutions, legislations and global governance; a 'clear focus on women inclusion' was provided in a workshop on communication for political parties; women in politics were one of the case studies when discussing critical thinking and political analysis; women in media and economic participation were included in the media and economy training. Additionally, one of the six dialogue meetings (political dinners between alumni) was on women in Arab politics. Finally, the programme engaged women either as guests speakers or trainers throughout 2018.

The interviewed Country Programme Manager reported that the Jordanian School of Politics can be seen to be contributing to women empowerment by enhancing knowledge on key related topics. However, this happens on a small scale. Interviewed external stakeholders in the context of the case study in Jordan indicated that systemic challenges in terms of access barriers and cultural perceptions remain in the country with regard to the participation of women to political activities. Positive results on the front of capacity building of women politicians, on the other hand, have been evidenced in the context of the **Ukraine** country programme. The programme has focused on building the capacity of female political leaders in particular with regard to political fundraising, in response to the identification of lack of funding as one of the main barriers for the participation of women to politics in the country. Specific training on the basics of political finance and campaign planning was provided to a group of women politicians coming from diverse geographic backgrounds. This has enabled the creation of an informal community of women politicians from different parties who share the goal of improving their parties' political culture with regard to women empowerment and participation.

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[67] As indicated in the 2019 Annual report for Jordan. The 2017 report indicated that 'young women [formed] more than 50% of participants. Detailed disaggregated data is not provided.

[68] The report indicates that: the 10 month training programme targeting young political and civic actors had 60 young male (63.4%) and female (36.6%) participants; the Coalition Building and Mergers between Parties workshop had 24 participants, of which 7% women); the Monitoring and Evaluation of Parties' Performance workshop had 23 participants from MoPPA, of which 30% women); the Financial Management workshop had representatives from 37 political parties and 11 members of MoPPA, of which 21% women); the workshops on the Jordanian By-law on State Subsidies to Political Parties had 140 participants, of which 14% women); the dialogue meeting between political and civic actors had 124 participants, of which 30% women); the celebration of International women Day saw the participation of 70 women, including some women holding leadership positions in political parties, young female partisan members and female MoPPA staff. No gender disaggregated data is provided for the two strategic planning workshops to MoPPA staff and political parties' members; the manifesto development workshop; and the workshop on political parties and parliamentary blocs.

Interviewed EECMD representatives indicated that gender aspects are fully integrated in the Democracy Schools training curricula, with five lectures on gender equality and human rights. As a result of participation to the Schools, EECMD also indicates that alumni have launched their own projects on women empowerment in politics. An assessment of the end term measurement of the gender-related indicator in the programme also shows a positive trend, with the number of political actors that have introduced or reformed party regulations on the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies increasing from zero (baseline) to six.[69] Both the annual country report for 2020 as well as interviews with EECMD also confirm that enabling conditions (outside of NIMD's sphere of influence/contribution) that facilitate this type of intervention are beginning to emerge also at system level, with parties becoming more active in supporting increased women participation and ensuring compliance with gender quota recommendations.

In **Burundi**, gender equality and inclusion were defined as a specific DfS programme objective. Interventions aimed at supporting the achievement of this objective included: supporting multiparty platforms of marginalised groups, in particular women and youth, to identify barriers and create a joint agenda; sharing best practices concerning the inclusion of minorities within the political parties; and providing capacity building and leadership training for women and youth within political parties. In practice, BLTP and NIMD activities have focused on fostering dialogue between female members of political parties[70] and supporting the elaboration and implementation of action plans aimed at increasing women participation in decision-making for each respective party. Ten workshops were subsequently organised for women representatives of authorities at national and provincial level to discuss the action plans and exchange their experiences and the challenges faced. Interviewed women beneficiaries additionally indicated that the trainings and debates organised by BLTP and NIMD on gender-related topics allowed to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the country context and encourage women participation in decision-making. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to assess whether participation of women in decision-making bodies (for example as a result of the 2020 electoral process[71]) is attributable to the activities of BLTP and NIMD.

The interviewed DfS Programme Manager for Burundi recognised that, although activities in this area were consistently planned as part of the programme, with attention devoted to ensuring participation of women to activities and working with female party members, gender and women participation were less centrally integrated in the programme as they should have been. According to the interviewee, the programme did not properly focus on understanding and addressing structural issues and underlying barriers to participation. These aspects are reportedly better addressed in the follow-up Women Peace and Security (WPS) programme. An interviewed representative of the Dutch embassy further confirmed that the embassy, as one of the donors of BLTP, had been stressing the importance of ensuring gender is appropriately integrated in interventions in a way that goes beyond discussions around quotas for participation to politics. According to the interviewee, this is what the 'gender debate' in Burundi is usually tied to. The interviewee confirmed the expectations expressed by the Burundi Programme Manager that the WPS programme would be able to better tackle the theme of gender and women empowerment from a strategic perspective.

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[69] End of term outcome measurement report 2020

[70] BLTP reports that the ruling party CNDD-FDD did not initially participate to these activities. A follow-up bilateral intervention took place with women representatives of the party to develop the action plan in 2019.

[71] Burundi is the highest ranking amongst African countries which held Parliamentary elections in 2020 in terms of women's representation, with 38% per cent in the lower house and 41% in the upper house. A 30% quota for women participation in Parliament is in place. See: https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/2020-women_in_parliament_en.pdf

Finally, the **Colombia** country programme offers the most significant examples with regard to the implementation of interventions directed at fostering women inclusion and participation to the political system. Gender is streamlined across all interventions by ensuring adequate gender balance in participation to activities, and about 40% of activities are specifically addressed at gender inclusion, protection and participation. Two strands of work in particular have emerged during the course of implementation of DfS: on the one hand, supporting the prevention, mitigation and punishment for the use of violence against female political actors; on the other hand, working towards the establishment of (political) rights for women. Amongst other initiatives, NIMD Colombia:

- Provided inputs to the reform of the Electoral Code, as part of which NIMD urged to include regulations to implement principles that would enhance political participation and representation of women;
- Provided inputs on how to include measures to prevent and mitigate violence against women in politics in upcoming legislation (Bill 050-2020C).
- Jointly with the Electoral Observation Mission, the National Electoral Council, and the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Women Equality, as well as United Nations Women, promoted the establishment of an Observatory of Violence Against Women in Politics.
- Developed and implemented three local Democracy Schools for the Political Empowerment of Women, which trained in total 129 women and strengthened their political knowledge and technical skills. A dedicated partnership was also developed with the Women's Secretariat of Bogotá city, which saw the participation of 30 local female leaders.
- Researched and published extensively on violence against women in politics, establishing itself as expert organisation in the country working on this theme.

Interviewed beneficiaries of the Colombia country programme confirmed the positive perception of NIMD's gender-related interventions, acknowledging NIMD efforts to incorporate gender both as a transversal and as a specific activity focus. One interviewed representative of a political party benefiting from NIMD training indicated that cooperation with the organisation allowed to bring upfront within the party the discussion on access barriers for women in decision-making processes, helping to move the debate beyond discussions on gender quotas. Furthermore, 100% of respondents confirmed the inclusion of women in interventions, to the extent allowed by context restrictions and third-party behaviour (i.e. Electoral Code in the process of including elements addressing gender violence in political participation; patriarchal systems within political parties, cultural gender obstacles at local level preventing more women to participate or be elected), and indicated that NIMD Colombia has become a well-established player in gender work. Finally, 100% of women respondents had a positive perception of NIMD intervention.

Overall, despite increasing attention and awareness raising on the importance of gender and inclusivity, the evaluation finds that more can be done to ensure overarching learning by NIMD on the interventions it implements as part of its programmes, in particular by ensuring that information on interventions at country level related to women inclusion is collected and reflected upon. This, with the aim of ensuring that the knowledge goes beyond country-level and feeds into the organisational learning process. In terms of interventions, the evaluation finds that NIMD's work in the context of DfS has remained, for most countries, limited to ensuring balanced gender participation to programme activities, gender-related elements in Democracy School curricula, and the organisation of thematic debates and dialogues, rather than focusing on understanding and eliminating barriers for access. Recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of NIMD's interventions directed towards women and inclusion, as well as on how to improve learning from country experiences are provided in chapter 5.

3.2 Efficiency

Under efficiency, the evaluation assessed whether the programme is likely to deliver results in an economic and timely way. This aligns with the official OECD-DAC definition for this criterion.

The key question underpinning the assessment of the degree of efficiency of an intervention is: 'How well are resources being used?'

Under this criterion, the evaluation looked at programme budgets (at programme- and country-levels), the programme execution rate and financial revisions.

3.2.1 Financial programme execution

Overhead costs

The evaluation identified that, within the DfS programme budget, expenditures related to DfS country programme implementation represented 62% of total programme costs, while expenditures related to the Knowledge and Innovation agenda (serving NIMD programme countries beyond DfS) represented 14%; expenditures related to institutional development (such as fundraising, positioning and PME) represented 12%; and overhead represented 12% of total programme costs.

The evaluation found that the use of overhead costs within the DfS programme has been within normal parameters. Desk research of the DfS programme's annual financial reports established that overhead costs were calculated on the basis of overall expenditures to represent 12% of total programme costs. This percentage has been stable throughout the implementation of the programme. The evaluation had no further observations on the use of overhead costs. The evaluation found no evidence that there were critical considerations around this area. It should be noted that the evaluation could not compare the expenditures of the DfS programme with other NIMD programmes or with other programmes implemented by organisations similar in nature and size to NIMD. Therefore, this did not allow the evaluation to benchmark these findings.

Looking beyond overhead costs, the evaluation found that, at the level of country programmes, on average, implementation costs (i.e. programme interventions related to the substantive achievement of the objectives) represented 62% of total country programme costs, whereas running costs (i.e. support to programme implementation through PME, local office costs and direct staff costs) represented 38% of total country programme costs. Overall, programme monitoring constituted 7% of programme running costs; capacity building for PME 7%; local office costs for partners/country offices 40%; and direct NIMD staff costs 45% of running costs. This shows a strong emphasis on monitoring, with programme monitoring and capacity building for PME combined representing 6% of country programme budgets. Local office costs and direct staff costs also represent significant shares of the total country programme costs, with 15% and 17%, respectively.

The evaluation identified that **Burundi** and **Colombia** had relatively higher programme running costs, with 43% and 46%, respectively. Meanwhile **Tunisia** had lower programme running costs, with 30%. The **Jordan** country programme represented the average of 38%, whereas the **Ukraine** country programme was just slightly higher with 34%. The evaluation did not find any specific cost-drivers that would explain the high/low levels of programme running costs between these different countries.

Implementation within planned period and budget and adaption of planning and delivery of financial resources in response to changes

The evaluation found that the programme implemented its activities within the planned period and budget. A review of the DfS annual financial reports established that budget execution of the DfS programme by end 2020 stood at 92%, which demonstrates a high level of delivery of financial resources. The evaluation identified that this percentage was relatively consistent across programme countries, with two notable exceptions: the **Ukraine** country programme showed an over-expenditure of 126% in relation to the originally approved budget, whereas the **Jordan** programme showed an under-expenditure of 81% vis-à-vis the total sum of the annual budgets as these were revised throughout the programme.[72] The over-expenditure on the Ukraine country programme can be explained by an increased focus on democracy education, with the opening of two Democracy Schools more than originally planned. The under-expenditure on the Jordan country programme can be explained by the slow implementation caused by the temporary suspension of activities in 2018. The country programme slowly resumed activities again in 2019, with the opening of a NIMD Jordan country office under the direct implementation modality.

The evaluation found that deviations in financial execution from the original budget were well documented and explained in the annual reports. Explanatory notes were included for all cases where the deviations exceeded 10% of the originally approved budget. The evaluation also identified that, in certain cases, budget execution in country programmes was lower than originally budgeted due to cost savings incurred by NIMD. This happened, for example, in the **Jordan** country programme in 2017 and in the **Colombia** country programme in 2018, as certain country programme costs could be (partially) covered by other funding sources. The evaluation therefore considers that the DfS programme responded adequately by revising its planning and delivery of financial resources in response to these changes in the implementation context. Whilst the evaluation only looked at a limited number of elements of the programme and financial execution of the DfS programme, on the basis of the observations detailed above the evaluation found no critical considerations regarding the efficiency of the DfS programme.

3.3   Sustainability

The OECD-DAC evaluation criteria define 'sustainability' as: 'The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.'[73] This is therefore closely linked to the realisation and impact of programme results.

> The key question underpinning the assessment of the degree of sustainability of an intervention is: 'Will the benefits last?'

The evaluators looked at the sustainability of the DfS programme through different angles: the level of sustainability of outcome results achieved; the financial (in)dependency and capacity development of local actors – be it NIMD country offices or local partner organisations; and finally, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainability of results. This last angle in particular is relevant to sustainability in the sense that it relates to the programme's ability to remain resilient and adapt in complex and rapidly changing environments. Against this background, the evaluation's

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[72]   As activities in Jordan were started in 2016 with an exploratory nature, there was no originally approved budget for the Jordan country programme. Therefore, the annual approved budgets for activities in Jordan have been taken as the basis for calculating the budget execution rate of the Jordan country programme.

[73]   See https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

key findings are presented in the following paragraphs. The evaluators note that this criterion formed part of 'data rigour level three', which, as outlined in the Methodology of this report, corresponds to a less in-depth level of scrutiny.

3.3.1 Sustainability of interventions, progress and results

Sustainability of results

The findings of this evaluation provide a mixed picture with regard to the degree of sustainability of the results of the DfS programme.

Interviews with both NIMD management representatives as well as DfS programme managers have highlighted the long-term nature of NIMD's commitment to supporting democracy building through establishing and nurturing durable working relationships with political parties and civic actors to achieve democratic change over-time. This implies that there is no defined time-frame for the organisation's interventions. The evaluation confirmed that plans for entering and exiting a country do not exist at the institutional level. Interviews with DfS programme managers at central level for all case study countries confirmed that this type of decisions is made on a case-by-case basis, generally underpinned by an understanding that, for the continuation of activities in a specific country, there needs to be a level of assurance that NIMD can continue to provide added value. This was also confirmed by NIMD's Executive Director. Exit strategies are also not mentioned in any of annual plans and reports, both at programme and at country level.

The existence of clear entry and exit strategies is fundamental to ensure that the results of the intervention are not lost once the intervention is completed. Existing guidelines from international organizations and NGOs on developing and implementing exit strategies consider the following principles to represent good practice in this area as a way to ensuring sustainability of results:

- Exit planned from the outset;
- Early thinking about sustainability;
- Regular consultation with partners and stakeholders;
- Constant communication.

The evaluation's findings have showed that, in general, the lack of an institutional approach to exiting a country (therefore with interventions guided and steered by such a strategy) has not affected the perceived sustainability of the DfS interventions by its target groups. Programme beneficiaries interviewed for the case studies in **Colombia** and **Burundi** have indicated that they feel ownership over programme interventions and results to a high extent. Beneficiaries interviewed in Colombia in particular highlighted that the participatory approach to planning and implementing interventions, in particular with regard to capacity building activities, contributes to this significantly. Beneficiaries interviewed in **Jordan** also indicated that they feel ownership with regard to the results of the interventions.

Financial dependency under DfS can also be considered low. Country offices/partner organisations have all been able, to a higher (e.g. Colombia) or lesser extent (e.g. Jordan, Ukraine, Burundi), to secure funding from other donors to continue their activities. For all DfS programme countries, except Ukraine, this also includes continued NIMD presence as a result of the new Power of Dialogue (PoD) programme and, for Colombia and Burundi, the WPS programme. The securing of additional funding is indeed particularly important in the case of Ukraine, where NIMD is ending activities. A new grant from the Dutch embassy, however, will allow, to a limited extent the continuation of the activities of the Democracy Schools.

Table 3.4 Overview of external donors mobilised[74]

Country	Donor
Colombia	European Union (Stability Fund)
	European Union (EU)
	European Union Delegation to Colombia
	National Endowment for Democracy
	National Endowment for Democracy
	Sweden Embassy in Colombia (SIDA)
Burundi	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
	United States State Department
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
	European Union (EU)
Ukraine	Embassy of the Netherlands
Jordan	European Union (EU)
Tunisia	Embassy of the Netherlands
	Embassy of the Netherlands

Capacities of local offices and implementing partners

As discussed above, the sustainability of the results of the DfS intervention is also dependent on the existence of local ownership at country level. This implies also that local staff has the sufficient capacities to ensure interventions can continue to be sustained after DfS funding comes to an end.

This evaluation finds that the level of capacity across DfS country offices and partner organisations is not uniform, and that discrepancies exist. The capacity building of partners has not been a stated objective under DfS, although programme annual plans do consistently indicate the implementation of several trainings and workshops to support the strengthening of local PME capacity and data collection processes. Financial training is also provided. Organisational assessments of local partners/country offices through the use of ECDPM-piloted 5 Core Capabilities approach (adapted to NIMD's BART methodology used at the time) are presented in the DfS programme baseline report for Ukraine, Tunisia, Colombia and Burundi, and in individual country reports. Burundi, Tunisia, Ukraine and Colombia all included in their initial outcome indicators one on improved organisational capacity of the local implementing partner. However, limited documental evidence of a process to strengthen identified weaknesses for each country was found in the annual reports 2016-2020.[75]. Interviews with representatives of the NIMD country office in **Colombia** indicated that technical support was received to some extent with regard to PME, indicators, and data collection approaches, but not with regard to fundraising, which would have reportedly been particularly useful as it would have allowed the office to better respond to increasingly complex and demanding fundraising processes and donor requirements. On the other hand, interviewed representatives of BLTP in **Burundi** reported a high level of satisfaction with regard to the support received by NIMD also in terms of strengthening quality working standards and organisational governance principle.

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[74] This overview does not include PoD, LEAP4 Peace and WPS funding. The overview has been compiled from the annual narrative country reports for all countries 2016 – 2020. As financial information on the amount of funding is not provided in narrative and financial reports, financial figures are not included in the table.

[75] The annual report for Ukraine for 2016 mentions eight different training activities on PME that took place, but no other activities of this type are mentioned in the other reports; Similarly, no concrete interventions are reported in this outcome area for both Burundi and Tunisia; it should be noted that the Annual Report 2020 for Burundi briefly mentions that BLTP has used DfS to strengthen its organisational capacity. In Tunisia, outcome A3 was later changed to a different one, but CEMI is recognised in reports as a strong implementing partner.

Interviewed EECMD representatives in Ukraine simply reported that interactions with NIMD remained on the technical level with regard to reporting requirements, and that no support was provided (no indication of need for additional support was made by EECMD either during the interview). This points to the aforementioned discrepancies across countries.

3.3.2 Impact of COVID-19 on sustainability

Impact of COVID-19 on outcome level changes achieved

This evaluation finds that the COVID-19 crisis has not had a significant impact on the achievement of DfS outcome level changes. Context-dependency, resilience and adaptation to contextual changes are key elements of the DfS programme and NIMD's interventions in general. The evaluation findings show that the adaptive programming approach inherent to DfS has also resulted in successful adaptations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviewed local partners/NIMD country office staff and programme managers at central-level have in most cases reported that their country activities have not been significantly affected by the pandemic. This is also confirmed through the annual country reports for 2020. Both interviewed stakeholders and country reports align in saying that changes have mainly concerned transferring activities to an online format, which has in most cases taken place successfully. In addition to adjusting existing activities, such as Democracy Schools training modules or classes, NIMD country offices and local partners also developed new initiatives to address and respond to the contextual changes. For example, in **Colombia**, NIMD led a Democracy School on citizen vigilance committees about measures implemented with regard to the management of COVID-19 in local municipalities. The School was attended by 170 students who learned about COVID-19 data, the economic impact of the pandemic and citizen vigilance in Colombia. A similar initiative was also implemented with the setting up of a virtual school on the Political Empowerment of Women, whose 33 (women) graduates attended, among other activities, a seminar on measures taken to manage COVID-19 with gender emphasis.[76] In **Ukraine**, in order to facilitate the maintenance of an open space for dialogue at system level, an additional platform for discussion was created. The platform included weekly webinars and online roundtables between the Democracy School students/Alumni and local political party representatives, and focused on several issues related to COVID-19 crisis management. These activities were attended by more than 250 participants.[77] Interviewed EECMD representatives also reported that, although transferring activities online did pose some initial challenges, it also allowed to open up participation to the Democracy Schools to a larger cohort of students. Across DfS countries the evaluators also found useful example of reallocation of funds from cancelled face-to-face activities: this was, for example, the case of **Jordan,** where savings derived from moving activities to an online format were used to set up a partnership with the Jordanian organization Crown Prince Foundation (CPF), and train 100 participants in advocacy skills.[78]

At the same time, the evaluation finds that some impact, in particular with regard to activities at system and actor level, has also been felt. Lockdowns and social distancing rules further curtailed the space for working with dialogue and trust building – according to the interviewed programme manager, this was particularly visible in Colombia, where parties were found to be unprepared to work online, and challenges emerged with regard to maintaining a system of checks and balances. This was confirmed also in the annual Colombia country report for 2020. Ensuring access to activities by individuals in rural areas with poor internet access was also reported as a challenge. In

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[76] Colombia annual report 2020, p. 8-9.
[77] Ukraine annual report 2020, p.2.
[78] Jordan annual report 2020, p. 5.

Jordan, the 2020 annual report indicates that interventions at system level[79] did not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions, and that fewer participants attended trainings by the Tunisian School of Politics (33 out of 45) due to COVID-related dropouts. Concerns with regard to COVID-19 response measures being used to curtail (political) freedoms and space for dialogue have emerged in DfS countries and have been reflected in the political context description of each country's annual report for 2020. Nevertheless, it remains too early to assess what the long-term impact on these countries' contexts will be.

3.4 Programme ToC

The evaluation looked at the role and use of the ToC model as part of NIMD's approach to and practice of adaptive programming. A challenge in assessing ToC design and use is that, despite an abundance of literature, there is no singular model to be taken as 'industry standard'. Moreover, literature recognises that **ToC use should be flexible**, allowing programme managers to deploy it as a compass for planning and delivering interventions, rather than as a map. The 2018 MTR also encouraged NIMD not to approach the ToC in a rigid manner, as this would hurt its practicality and appeal, thereby undermining its central intent, namely to be used by programme staff as a means to guide and steer programme interventions towards their strategic objectives.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the evaluators have focused on the three qualities ToCs should possess, according to ODI to adequately perform its function, namely its ability to (i) provide a discourse; (ii) to be used as a tool; and (iii) to facilitate an adaptive approach.

Theories of Change

A ToC can be defined as "an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens, and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or group of people." ODI states that ToCs should demonstrate the following qualities:

- Discourse: provide a story about change.
- Tool: articulate the results' chain towards the desired end-goal.
- Approach: enable adaptive programming and management for change.

ToC use should be based on the following: (a) continuously reflect on and revise the ToC; (b) use the ToC for learning purposes based on actual implementation; (c) facilitate bottom-up strategy and direction, enabling local ownership; and (d) use the ToC as a compass, not as a map.

Source: ODI (2015). *Theories of Change: time for a radical approach to learning in development.*

3.4.1 Active use of ToCs to inform planning, programming and reporting in FCAS

Validity of programme ToC and evidence for change pathways
The evaluation finds that the programme ToC is overall valid, but that this is due largely to the fact that the ToC is formulated at a high-level. As a result, the overall objectives established for each programme country, as articulated in country-level ToCs through a selection of outcomes, remain relevant, despite significant changes in the implementation context. The evaluation considers that, while the programme ToC provides a relevant "macro" lens for focusing on long-term objectives, it does not allow for a more granular understanding of which changes need to take place to achieve

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[79] As discussed in section 4.1, it should be noted that Jordan is an outlier in terms of interventions undertaken at system level compared to other countries, as they focus mainly on training, through workshops and the School of Politics, young political actors.

those objectives. This is also because NIMD's work during programme implementation in practice takes place mostly below the level of the defined outcomes.

Based on desk review of (country) programme documents, the evaluation found that there is a strong consistency between the institutional ToC, the DfS programme ToC and the country-level ToCs, with logical variations to specify the particular characteristics of each country context and the related challenges. All ToCs are set at the outcome-level, without specifying which output and intermediate outcome-level results are needed for achieving the intended outcomes. Another common characteristic is that, for each country, separate ToCs are presented for the system, actor and culture levels. There is thus no **integrated ToC** at country level showing how interventions at system, actor and culture levels are intertwined. Although NIMD emphasises the interconnectedness of results at these levels, the way the ToCs are presented gives the impression that the respective change pathways are stratified.

The ToC are actively used for planning, programming and reporting. This is done mostly at set times in the year, usually during planning, mid-year and end-year review. Interviews with country office staff and local partner organisations confirmed that staff find the ToCs relevant and useful. Staff demonstrate an adequate understanding of the ToC and how this applies to planning and programming. However, during the interviews, staff also commented that the ToCs under the DfS programme were designed in The Hague, with little or no involvement from the local country office or partner organisation. While the evaluation found that this did not affect their acceptance of the ToC, it does allude to a perceived issue of ownership over the ToC, which will be discussed later in this report. It should be noted that this has not been the case for all countries, as interviews with representative of local partners in **Tunisia** and **Burundi** have indicated they have contributed to the design, in the case of the former, and the adjustment, in the case of the latter, of their country's ToC during DfS implementation. These countries therefore show stronger ownership. Conversely, country programme staff stated stronger satisfaction with the new ToCs under the new programming cycle, which includes the Power of Dialogue (PoD) and LEAP4Peace programmes, as these were designed in a more consultative and participatory manner. This was apparently also due to the proactive role of the PME team in involving country teams. Country programme teams confirmed this strengthened the context-specificity of the ToC under the PoD programme.

Interviews with NIMD programme managers revealed that they equally considered the ToCs to be valid and useful. Although they admitted that the country-level ToCs **do not accurately reflect the complexities of the country contexts**, the way the ToCs are defined at the outcome-level allows to accommodate actual results under the ToC. While the broad nature of these ToCs thus allows for flexibility in planning and programming, the downside is that they do not provide clarity on which more tangible changes (at output and intermediate outcome-level) are pursued by the country programmes.

The evaluation considers the current formulation of the country-level ToCs to have benefits, but also limitations. The main benefit is its **clarity on long-term objectives in the country contexts**, as formulated through the intended outcomes. This enables the country teams to use the ToCs as an overall "compass" for programming interventions. The drawback of the design of the country-level ToCs is that while they outline change at high (outcome) level, they **do not identify the results' chain** leading to these outcome changes. This limits the use of the ToCs for critical reflection, as in their current design they do not provide a basis for analysing to which extent NIMD's interventions are producing sequential and incremental changes towards these outcomes. There are thus clear costs and benefits to the current design of the ToCs. There should also be a caution not to over-specify a ToC or make programming follow rigidly the ToC, as this would curtail their intended use and make them lose their appeal as programming tools.

Validity of ToC assumptions

The role of assumptions within a ToC is to make explicit which conditions need to be in place for the foreseen changes to happen. If assumptions are formulated in a context-specific and focused manner, then these provide a good basis for interrogating why programme interventions are or are not contributing to the desired results. In other words, the more explicit assumptions are, the easier it becomes to test these using available evidence. The evaluation finds that while overall programme ToC assumptions have held, they did not provide this basis for understanding why change is not materialising at outcome-level. While desk-research confirmed that assumptions are supported by evidence from PEAs, country reports and other consulted external sources at country-level, the evaluation found that these assumptions have been **formulated at a high-level**. The following are illustrations from the evaluators' analysis of the assumptions, conducted as part of the desk research of the country programme ToCs for the three case study countries. The evaluation considers the following examples to be representative of the analysis. In the case of **Burundi**, for peaceful, inclusive and democratic elections to take place (system-level change), the ToC identifies that an inclusive dialogue process and multiparty agreement must be established between all political actors, because of the assumption that "an inclusive dialogue and negotiation process is an essential condition for a sustainable solution to the political crisis in Burundi." While the evaluation agrees that an inclusive dialogue and negotiation process is indeed a clear precondition, the assumption does not articulate which elements or specific conditions need to be in place for this process to be viable, considering the long history of frail political dialogues in Burundi. It also does not allow to understand on which of these elements the Burundi country programme can best support. In the case of **Jordan**, in order to strengthen inclusive and democratic political party structures (actor-level change), young politicians must improve their knowledge on the political systems, inclusive party structures and internal democracy and their skills to engage with and represent citizens, because of the assumptions that "increased capacities will increase the stature of young politicians within their parties and allow them to address reform." While the evaluation agrees that strengthened capacities are clearly beneficial for enhancing youth's visibility and their potential agency within political parties, it is not clear how this will translate into an improved ability to address the needed reforms, considering the acknowledged barriers for youth within political parties and what role the Jordan country programme can play in this regard to support these youth. In the case of **Colombia**, in order to enhance democratic values of (political) actors for mitigating the risks of reverting to violent conflict (culture-level change), the ToC identifies that political actors and civil society must actively address the challenges that political parties face in a scenario of peace building, because of the assumption that "political and civil society play a central role in the transition and consolidation of the peace agreements in a post-conflict scenario." While the evaluation agrees that both actors evidently play a key role in the peace process, the assumption does not give insight into what type of role could be best fulfilled by these actors, based on the experience of the peace process to date. It does not allow to understand how the Colombia country programme can best support both of these actors.

This evaluation considers that, rather than pointing towards an unwillingness to test assumptions, the level at which these are formulated inhibits this exercise of reflection and revision. Whereas the formulated assumptions are valid for the higher-level changes that NIMD is pursuing, NIMD's work in practice takes place below the outcome-level. Where NIMD is directly working towards achieving immediate and tangible results (at the output and intermediate outcome-levels), there are specific assumptions appropriate for these levels to be articulated.

This is furthermore evidenced, for example, by the fact that, despite drastic changes in the country contexts during the course of implementation of the country programmes, no revisions to the ToCs, including their assumptions, have been documented. Whereas country programmes evidence strongly evolving contexts, characterised by restrictive operating environments (Burundi, Jordan),

polarisation (Colombia), dysfunction (Ukraine), and dissatisfaction with the political system (Tunisia), these were only reflected to a limited extent through corresponding evolutions in ToCs and ABPoCs, partly because of their broad design.

Interviews with NIMD programme managers and country office staff/local partner organisations confirmed that they also consider that assumptions have held up against reality. However, interviews with personnel from the MFA/DSH revealed a concern about the ability of NIMD to critically assess these assumptions, as the evidence-base for these is considered to be weak, which does not allow for systematic learning how NIMDs interventions contribute to its stated objectives.

3.4.2   *Application of adaptive programming in DfS*

Adaptation of Actor-Based Pathways of Change at country level
Adaptations to the ABPoCs reflect contextual changes. It does not become evident that adaptations have been made based on changes in assumptions, or as a result of monitoring programme implementation. The evaluation found only a limited number of instances where ABPoCs were changed. In those cases where this was done, the **revisions responded to openings and constraints within the implementation contexts**. For example, NIMD **Jordan** in 2020 revised the number of ABPoC from three to one due to the government's instruction to halt interventions working with political parties. As a consequence, the ABPoCs targeting the leaders and members of political parties were dropped. As a result, NIMD Jordan focused its efforts on the remaining ABPoC targeting youth, which eventually led to expanding its interventions to cover a wider scope of this target group. NIMD **Colombia** in 2019 added an additional actor (the High Councillor for Stabilization and Post-Conflict), as the programme identified an opportunity for engagement. Meanwhile, in **Tunisia**, CEMI in 2019 added two additional actors, following the elections, to take into account new parties and informal political movements, which, as outlined earlier in this report, had surprisingly entered the political scene and had demonstrated their political appeal to voters.

While the evaluation considers these revisions to be logical changes to the opportunities and constraints presented within the implementation context, they represent in essence additions and subtractions to the total package of ABPoCs. The desk research did not find evidence that individual ABPoCs had been revised from a strategic perspective by adapting the type or sequence of the results outlined in the ABPoCs, or by refining assumptions underlying each. The evaluation finds this to be consistent with the observation made earlier regarding the lack of revision of the country-level ToCs. As the country offices/partner organisations use the ABPoCs jointly with the ToCs, the revision of the ABPoCs in principle also takes place two or three times a year.

NIMD introduced the ABPoCs in 2018 following the recommendation from the MTR to bridge the gap between the programme interventions and the country programme's intended outcomes as outlined in the country-level ToCs and in order to make country programmes more focused. The ABPoCs were then applied as part of the 2019 planning cycle. The evaluation considers that the ABPoCs in theory **constitute a useful addition to the ToC,** in that they indeed do 'fill the gap' as recommended by the MTR. The evaluation also notes that their application has been recent (2018) and acknowledges that it takes time for this new tool to mature and for country offices/partner organisations to become comfortable with the practice of using these. Considering the limited timespan of their use, the evaluation cautions against assessing too strictly the requirement to demonstrate significant levels of revision. However, simultaneously, the evaluation notices that country offices/partner organisations report limitedly on the critical reflections regarding the viability of the selected individual ABPoCs. Additionally, desk research of country-level reporting revealed that from 2019 onwards annual reports switch from commenting on the ToC to the ABPoCs. The

evaluation considers that this has allowed country offices/partner organisations the opportunity to assess the relevance, quality and accuracy of the design of the ABPoC and reflect on and suggest needed revisions as a result.

The ABPoCs better articulate what changes need to place at actor level between the programme's interventions and the intended outcomes. However, while the resulting overview at country-level becomes more complete, the evaluation finds that it also becomes **more complex** due to the large number of pathways per country. The use of the ABPoC tool has led to a prolific production of relevant pathways in the country contexts, with an average of four to five pathways per country (see table 3.5 below).

Table 3.5 Actor-based pathways per country programme

Actor	Burundi	Colombia	Jordan	Tunisia	Ukraine	MENA
Parliamentarians		✓	✓	✓		
Political parties	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Youth in political parties	✓		✓	✓		
Women in political parties	✓	✓	✓			
Marginalised groups in PP		✓				
Young political activists			✓			
Ruling party	✓					
Opposition parties	✓					
New political movements				✓		
National Electoral Council		✓				
Presidential Council		✓				
Ministry Internal Affairs		✓				
Elected repres. bodies		✓				
DS students					✓	
DS alumni		✓				✓
Religious authorities	✓					
Administrative authorities	✓					

The individual ABPoCs do not articulate how they intersect with others. As a result, the evaluation finds it difficult to see how, taken together at an aggregate level, they represent a cohesive approach. While individual ABPoCs define contributions to the country-level results at the system, actor and culture levels, it is not clear how they fit within country-level ToCs at the respective system, actor and culture levels. As the ToC and ABPoC at country-level are intended to be used as one 'package', the evaluation questions their practicality based on the issues identified.

Impact of adapting programming practices on programme outcomes
Adaptive programming has been **used actively in DfS.** The practice, as managed by NIMD, is **functional**, although there is no systematic documentation of the changes made. Interviews with NIMD programme managers and country office/partner organisations confirmed that adaptive programming is used throughout the year to make (minor) changes to the country programmes. This happens mostly around two key moments in the annual PME cycle, namely the mid-year and end-year review, although interviews with country offices/partner organisations confirmed that there is an ongoing communication between The Hague and country offices/partner organisations to discuss developments, challenges and required changes to country programmes, if warranted.

The evaluators' desk research of the NIMD annual reports shows that mostly major changes are documented and communicated to the MFA. This includes for example the halting of exploratory

activities (e.g. regarding South Sudan in 2016 due to deteriorating political and security conditions, regarding Lebanon in 2017 due to political sensitivities to work with the full range of political actors in the country, and regarding Venezuela in 2019 to initiate a pilot programme). This also covers changes in the scope of country programmes (e.g. a decreased focus on actor level in Ukraine in 2017, reformulation of outcomes in Burundi in 2018 to reflect ambition levels, inclusion of individual ABPoCs in Colombia and Tunisia in 2019) and interruptions to programme implementation (e.g. changing the implementing partner in Jordan in 2017/2018 and the suspension of the partner organisation's activities in Burundi in 2018/2019). Interviews with NIMD programme managers revealed that minor changes to country programmes are oftentimes not documented and that country offices/partner organisations also find it challenging to keep track of all these changes through an established paper trail. Interviews with MFA/DSH personnel also found that the MFA as a donor would want to see a **documented rationale** for which significant changes are taking place in country programmes and the rationale for these.

Changes in the scope of country programmes resulting from adaptive programming, thus largely reflect the changes in the implementation context. The evaluation finds that this attests to NIMD's ability to respond to these challenges in a manner that seeks to maintain the viability for achieving its intended outcomes amidst the contextual developments.

The evaluation found it difficult to trace whether these adaptations have led to improving NIMD's ability to achieve programme outcomes. The meta-analysis of country programmes' outcomes measurements revealed that there are overall positive trends in outcome-indicator measurements,[80] but that there is little continuity in measurement either within countries (i.e. annually tracking progress against these indicators throughout the full programme life cycle)[81] or between countries (i.e., tracking progress against common (intermediate) outcome-indicators). This makes it challenges to understand the effect of these adaptations against the background of results' measurement.

On a final note, the evaluation takes into account that the **new MAP 2021-2025**[82] recognises the centrality of adaptive programming to building NIMD's profile. Since supporting changes in political contexts is the nature of NIMD's work, facilitating change throughout its country programmes must become part of its *modus operandi*. Under the new MAP, this will be facilitated through (i) establishing a common language, tools and skills amongst NIMD staff on adaptive programming; (ii) embedding adaptive programming in management and practice; (iii) continuing learning and innovating by becoming part of adaptive programming networks; (iv) building reputation for adaptive programming for fundraising and positioning; and (v) linking adaptive programming to internal learning.

The evaluation also notes that NIMD has invested strongly in the development of a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) approach to strengthen adaptive programming in NIMD country programmes. The application and use of PEAs will provide a strong a solid basis for reflection on the continuing validity of assumptions, but this will then need to be strongly linked to an exercise of confirming ToC assumptions on paper.

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[80] For Burundi, 4 out of 7 outcome-indicators showed progress in the end-line measurement as compared to the baseline. For Colombia, 7 out of 8 outcome-indicators showed progress. For Jordan, 1 out of 4 outcome-indicators showed progress. For Tunisia, 6 out of 7 outcome-indicators showed progress. For Ukraine, 4 out of 6 outcome-indicators showed progress.
[81] For all countries there are base-, mid- and end-line measurements.
[82] An advanced draft of the MAP was viewed by the evaluators

Use of Political Economy Analysis in NIMD programming

PEA is about seeing and understanding the (formal and informal) rules of the game governing any political context. PEA explains the behaviour of political and civic actors by looking at the rules and norms that influence their choices and motivation. The objective of PEA is to inform policy and programming dealing with these actors accordingly.

NIMD's approach is already politically sensitive. Thinking politically is at the core of NIMD's work. Although NIMD applied since 2014 a political context scan for country programmes through its baseline and review tool (BART), it decided to formalise its PEA approach in 2018. The MTR in 2018 also found that PEA was not consistently used throughout the organisation and was largely dependent on individual knowledge and intuition. The lack of a common PEA approach also did not allow NIMD to learn about its programming context and how to operate in it, for example by linking the PEA exercise to testing and adjusting of the ToC.

To this end, NIMD commissioned the Clingendael Institute for International Relations to design a standardised approach to conduct PEA, building on NIMDs prior work in this area. The final PEA framework was finalised in 2021 and rolled-out as part of the inception phase of the PoD and LEAP4Peace programmes. The proposed steps for conducting the PEA exercise also explicitly link this to proposing programming implications by adjusting the ToC and ABPs.

Source: NIMD (2018). *Draft NIMD Political Economy Analysis approach*; Clingendael (2019). *Final report. Adjusting NIMDs PEA course*; NIMD (2021). *Political Economy Analysis process guide*.

NIMD's M&E approach for DfS

The challenges in comparing and aggregating results across countries are, naturally, close to the heart of NIMDs M&E actors. The M&E framework has changed significantly over the course of the implementation of DfS also to respond to these challenges.

In 2017, core compulsory intermediate outcome indicators were introduced across all country-level M&E frameworks to allow for better aggregation of results. This was nonetheless still considered to remain a complicated exercise, as reported outcomes and intermediate outcomes showed little consistency between countries. While NIMD does not use targets to track progress against indicators, there will be a push in future years to do so, as the MFA will increasingly request this from the partners they fund. NIMD is aware that setting targets does not sit well with the reality of implementing programmes in volatile political environments.

NIMD's further development of its M&E strategy has remained sensitive to these challenges. The organisation acknowledges that, while programme interventions can be held accountable for those results within its *sphere of control* (such as inputs, activities and outputs), it is difficult to offer this assurance for changes at the level of intermediate outcomes and outcomes, which fall within the programme's *sphere of influence*, but which cannot be directly controlled by the programme[83]. The M&E strategy therefore combines the measurement of the programme's progress and impact with other methods such as outcome harvesting monitoring and evaluations and the review of actor-based pathways of change.

NIMD has particularly invested in the use of outcome harvesting as means to collect evidence of what has changed. Outcome harvesting is a process to identify, formulate, verify, analyse and interpret outcomes in contexts where cause-effect relations are not fully understood. The method then works backwards to determine when and how an intervention contributed to these changes. This method does not look for those outcomes pre-set in the programme document, but tries to identify those results which evidence relevant change in behaviour, relationships, action, policy and practice relevant to the areas of intervention of the programme. Country offices and partner organisations were given a degree of freedom to conduct these outcome harvesting monitoring exercises, with support but less strict oversight from the central M&E team. This led to a wealth of evidence, but also made it increasingly challenging to aggregate the resulting data.

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[83] See NIMD (2020). *Manual for the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework*.

3.5 Knowledge and Innovation agenda; strategic fundraising and positioning

3.5.1 Contribution of the Knowledge and Innovation agenda to the quality management and implementation of the DfS programme

Successful implementation of the Knowledge and Innovation Agenda

Knowledge production has been prolific and largely in line with stated objectives, as outlined in the DfS programme document. While the **relevance of knowledge products** delivered under the DfS programme is clear, the **link to programming impact** in DfS countries has not become evident.

In order to assess the extent to which knowledge products produced under the DfS programme have aligned with the stated objectives on Knowledge and Innovation, as outlined in the DfS programme document, the evaluation has based its analysis on a systematisation of knowledge products and learning events, compiled as part of the desk research. It has to be noted that this systematisation is not exhaustive, and thus does not necessarily cover all products and events delivered during the implementation period of the DfS programme. This is mostly due to the absence of a centralised overview, which has required the evaluators to extract relevant knowledge products and events from annual reports, interviews and selected documents provided by the KSR team. It is important to state that while the evaluation was limited to the countries under the DfS programme, the Knowledge and Innovation agenda implemented under the DfS programme served all NIMD programme countries. Its reach is thus much wider than the DfS countries only. Therefore, the evaluation acknowledges its limitations in data collection, as the selected approach and available resources did not allow the evaluators to conduct data collection beyond the DfS countries. This also did not allow to track the roll-out of knowledge products on a case-by-case basis, or assess how knowledge products had reached external stakeholders. This was done for DfS countries to the extent that country offices/partner organisations highlighted that knowledge products and events had been relevant for country programming. This presented clear limitations in understanding how knowledge products impacted country programming beyond the DfS countries.

The evaluation found that NIMD had **mostly achieved its stated objectives** for the delivery of knowledge products and support to innovation, as outlined in the DfS programme. For example, NIMD defined **six priority areas** to further develop as part of its approach on working in FCAS. The analysis established that NIMD delivered tangible knowledge products on all of these areas, with the support of expert sessions, exchanges and international conferences. NIMD also set out to **harmonise its approach** for each of the three levels of interventions (system, actor, culture). Further, it is established that NIMD has also produced tangible outputs on each of these levels. The evaluation remarks that these deliverables correspond to the "supply-driven" component of NIMD's knowledge agenda, in that NIMD intended to make this knowledge and guidance available for country offices/partner organisations, when needed.[84] The Knowledge and Innovation agenda, to a certain extent, was also able to respond to knowledge demands from country offices/partner organisations, as these were inventoried by the knowledge advisors throughout implementation of the programme. For example, this led to support to trust building and mediation in Myanmar; policy training for political parties in Ethiopia, Georgia and Jordan; research on the conversion of ex-armed groups into political movements in Colombia and Mozambique; research on illicit networks in the Sahel and Central America; and women's political participation. Partnership networks in the Middle East region were explored in Jordan, Kurdistan/Iraq and Lebanon, with only the Jordan pilot evolving into a country programme.

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[84] This aligns with NIMD objective to "(…) further strengthen its knowledge and understanding of the functioning of political parties in post-conflict, fragile and repressive societies, including dimensions of gender, ethnicity, and inclusiveness; access to the political arena for opposition or emerging parties; the development of political party programmes, as well as democratic values and behaviours." NIMD (2015). *DfS programme document*, p. 15.

Another key deliverable of the Knowledge and Innovation agenda, the **PEA tool**, is now in use throughout all NIMD programme countries. This tool was initially developed in 2017, piloted in Burundi, Ethiopia and Kenya, then further developed in 2020 and piloted in Iraq and the Sahel, after which it has been rolled-out in all countries covered under the new PoD programme.

The **Knowledge Hub**, another key deliverable under the Knowledge and Innovation agenda, was developed and launched in 2017. It has taken up a special place within NIMD's knowledge and innovation strategy, as this was intended to be a database for NIMD knowledge products as well as an interactive platform for staff from The Hague and country offices/partner organisations to meet online to facilitate discussion, knowledge exchange and peer learning within the wider NIMD network. Its scope was however reduced in 2020 to primarily serve as an online repository for knowledge products, as well as a hub for information on institutional policies and strategies.

NIMD also strengthened its network with international organisation to support its work on political party assistance in FCAS, for example with the Berghof Foundation, the Folkke Bernadotte Academy and through the establishment of the Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy (GPMD).

Regarding innovation, NIMD organised three international **Innovating Democracy events**. To support knowledge exchange between citizens, politicians and government staff on the future of democracy, a dedicated website[85] was created in partnership with En.ablist. The latter also took over responsibilities to provide NIMD with updated mappings of emerging global developments in the area of democracy. As NIMD staff capacity to support innovation was limited from 2018 onwards,[86] NIMD focused mostly on supporting the piloting of innovations in programme countries. A **Democracy Lab** for example was set up to support political parties in the application of digital tools. The evaluation found most tangible evidence of the roll-out of this work in Colombia, where NIMD Colombia introduced the CiviCRM tool to three political parties, as outlined earlier in the report. The introduction and roll-out of outcome harvesting as a monitoring tool should also be mentioned in this regard.

While there is a clear indication that knowledge products have been rolled-out in country contexts, the evaluation based on the case studies did not find concrete examples of how these have been used and applied in country programmes. On one hand, this is possibly due to the limitation in data collection cited earlier, as the Knowledge and Innovation agenda covered a much wider range than the DfS countries only. On the other hand, the evaluation found that the country teams interviewed did not recognise the Knowledge and Innovation Agenda as having been instrumental in the planning and delivery of interventions within the country programmes. Although it became clear from the interviews with country teams that the Knowledge Hub was being consulted, no practical examples were given as to how these knowledge products were used to inform programming.

The table in annex 7 provides an overview of the knowledge products identified by the evaluation, including the countries where these products were applied and to which component of the Knowledge and Innovation Agenda they belong.

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[85]   See innovatingdemocracy.io
[86]   After the dedicated policy advisor retired in 2017.

Within NIMD, the **KSR team** has been the unit mainly responsible for the development and implementation of the Knowledge and Innovation agenda. The evaluation considers that the resources allocated to the KSR unit did not sufficiently equip the team to carry out this ambitious agenda. While the unit started in April 2016 with 4.5 full-time staff, only 1.5 staff were dedicated to knowledge, with another 2 staff for communications and 1 staff for fundraising.[87] In 2019, the KSR team increased to 2.5 staff for knowledge, 2.5 for communications and 1 staff for fundraising.[88] Interviews with staff from the KSR team evidenced that the unit initially counted on the support of programme managers in The Hague and the country teams for the roll-out of the Knowledge and Innovation agenda. However, in practice this set-up resulted difficult to coordinate, where programme managers and country teams sometimes demonstrated to be supportive of knowledge initiatives, but sometimes also resistant to these, thus significantly hampering their roll-out. The evaluation considers that this left the KSR unit rather isolated, with a less than optimal connection to programme managers and country teams. The evaluation considers that this has hampered NIMDs knowledge and innovation efforts.

Next to the limited capacity to support the implementation of the agenda, this has likely also impacted the **visibility** of NIMD's Knowledge and Innovation agenda and the perception of its relevance by country teams. Strikingly, the evaluation found that, based on interviews with country offices/partner organisations for the selected case studies, these teams were not aware of NIMD's knowledge strategy and did not clearly understand the KSR role or leadership within this process. As stated before, examples from country teams on the use and application of knowledge products were very limited. The evaluation considers that this does not necessarily reflect on the quality of the knowledge products *per se*, but rather to communicational deficits around the Knowledge and Innovation agenda, which was not able to sufficiently clarify how these knowledge products can be used. One country team interviewed provided an explicit assessment on the perceived relevance of the Knowledge and Innovation agenda in stating that they felt this was seen as being disconnected from country needs and priorities. Another country team expressed the following in one of its annual reports: "[t]he [country] programme is currently not making use of knowledge products, nor is there a demand for it."[89]

An additional challenge in this regard has been the **involvement of different business units/teams** within NIMD, with **limited centralised team capacity** to steer this process, leading to a fragmented approach. Whereas the KSR team has focused primarily on knowledge production and management, the PME team and programme managers in The Hague have been in a position to monitor country programme implementation, discuss programming challenges and how to strategically address these, and identify (documented) programming insights, lessons learned and best practices derived from the annual reports. This however did not constitute a closed feedback loop, leaving the **potential for learning** significantly underutilised. The evaluation looks at internal learning in detail further in the report.

3.5.2   *Results achieved under Fundraising and Positioning*

The evaluation found that NIMD has made **significant progress** in its fundraising and positioning efforts, with activities undertaken on these areas in line with the objectives as stated in the DfS programme document. The evaluation considers therefore these efforts to have had a **positive impact** on NIMD's position in the market as niche organisation, as well as on broadening its donor base. Although the evaluation did not reach out to external stakeholder to gauge how NIMD's brand and (quality of) work is perceived, the preliminary results of the brand image survey conducted by NIMD in 2021, as well as interviews with development partners and external stakeholders in the field, do provide a basis for supporting this statement.

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[87]   Based on information from the KSR team. Organigrammes were not assessed as part of this evaluation.

[88]   Ibidem.

[89]   As cited in the 2018 mid-year report of the specific country programme.

The evaluators wish to note that the findings on the areas of fundraising and positioning are derived from a limited evidence-base, due to the demarcated focus of the evaluation which did not prioritise fundraising and positioning as central topics to be explored. The added value of this analysis resides therefore mostly in the wider institutional framework this provides for assessing NIMD's work.

Regarding fundraising, NIMD expressed a clear ambition to "diversify the funding base towards a broader range of donors in order to ensure the financial health and stability of the organization."[90] It set itself an ambitious target by increasing non-MFA funding from 23% in 2015 to 40% in 2020.[91] This was intended to be done through a two-fold strategy: by diversifying the donor portfolio; and by securing flexible, multi-annual funding. The positioning efforts were intended to be closely intertwined with fundraising. As stated in the DfS programme document, visibility, networking and a good reputation are key to successful fundraising.[92] It is important for donors, national, regional and international policy makers and peer organisations to know what NIMD does and what it can offer in the field of democracy support, political party assistance and good governance, so that NIMD achieves "top-of-mind awareness" amongst these current and prospective donors. Against these ambitious goals, the evaluation found that NIMD had managed to strengthen its internal capacity for fundraising by creating the position of a fundraising coordinator in 2017. This led to the creation of a mapping of current and prospective donors and an inventory of funding opportunities in order to actively pursue these opportunities for resource mobilisation.

While to **target of 40% non-MFA funding** was not achieved by 2020, the evaluation found that significant progress has been made to decrease the dependency on MFA funding. Although desk research of annual reports revealed that MFA funding continued to account between 70%-80% of total NIMD funding throughout the DfS programme, a note should be made that this percentage was strongly affected by additional MFA funding absorbed by NIMD, as a result of the bankruptcy of NIMD's partner, the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), within the SPDD programme. Although the evaluation did not access the financial reports for the full range of NIMD country programmes beyond DfS, an interviewed representative of NIMD management in The Hague argued that, without this proportion of AWEPA-funding absorbed by NIMD into the SPDD budget, non-MFA funding would have been indeed closer to the target of 40%.

The evaluation found that NIMD has exercised consistent efforts to place its work before national and international target audiences, such as donors, peer organisations and policy makers. Desk research identified that the majority of these activities appear to be slightly tilted towards policy-makers. Activities targeting policy makers include, for example, a panel discussion on 'Moving from thinking politically, to acting politically' in June 2016 in Brussels; a NIMD symposium on Ukraine and the South Caucasus in June 2016 in The Hague; a panel discussion on Political Education Programmes at the EU Partnership Forum, in July 2017 in Brussels; the Innovating Democracy event, in November 2017 in The Hague; the "Democracy Is…" social media campaign in 2019 and NIMD's participation in the High-level Political Forum on SDG16 in July 2019 in New York, organised together with GPMD. Activities targeting peer organisations include, for example, a global meeting of the political party peer network in May 2016 in Norway; a lab session on Women's Political Participation during the European Democracy Days in June 2016 in Brussel; the launch of the GPMD (consisting of 18 organisations) in October 2016 in Brussels; and NIMD's role in co-organising the international conference on "Representation in the Age of Populism" in June 2018 in Brussels. The above list of events is not exhaustive, but shows a clear focus to position NIMD's work on the EU-level. The evaluation finds that this is consistent with the **priority given to**

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90   NIMD (2015). DfS programme document, p. 22.
91   Ibidem.
92   Ibidem.

accessing EU-funding as principal means to diversify NIMD funding. The evaluation notes that NIMD has presented the organisation in relevant fora within its particular niche of the development partner landscape and that this has most likely resulted in bringing a positive visibility to its work. The table 3.6 below provides a summary overview of identified positioning activities and events during 2016-2020.

Table 3.6 Summary overview of positioning activities and events during 2016-2020

Year	Initiatives	Target group		
		Policy makers	Peer organsations	Donors
2016	Panel discussion 'Moving from thinking politically, to acting politically', June, Brussels	✓		
	Lab Session on Women's Political Participation, European Democracy Days, June, Brussel		✓	
	Launch of Global Partnership for Multiparty Democracy (18 organisations), October, Brussel		✓	
	Political Party Peer network Global Meeting in Utoya, Norway		✓	
	NIMD symposium on Ukraine and the South Caucasus	✓		
2017	Workshop on Democratic Governance during launch World Bank Report, February, The Hague	✓		✓
	Panel discussion on Political Education Programmes, EU Partnership Forum, July, Brussels	✓		
	Launch 'Democracy is' campaign	✓		✓
	Conference on Women's Political Rights, October, Hammamet, Tunisia	✓		
	Innovating Democracy event, November, The Hague	✓		
2018	Representation in the Age of Populism, international conference, Brussels	✓		
2019	Relaunch of Democracy is' social media campaign	✓		
2020	High-level Political Forum on SDG16 in July 2019 in New York, organised together with GPMD	✓		✓

Due to restrictions in the focus of the work, the evaluation could not assess how these initiatives and efforts affected the perception of donors, peer organisations and policy makers on the relevance of NIMD's work, and how this correlated with fundraising achievements. This includes the possibility to benchmark these efforts with other organisations and programmes similar in nature and size. However, the preliminary findings of the recent brand image survey conducted by NIMD amongst donors, beneficiaries, peer organisations and academia, indicate that NIMD's brand image amongst these stakeholders overlaps strongly with NIMD's (desired) corporate identity. In particular, the preliminary findings indicate that NIMD's work is seen to be value driven; that NIMD's global presence is seen as an asset for the organisation; that NIMD is considered to have a clear approach towards democracy support; and that NIMD is seen as actively promoting the political participation of women and underrepresented groups.

3.5.3 Impact of Fundraising and Positioning strategy on donor support for the DfS programme

Effectiveness in influencing strategies of external stakeholders/donors

The evaluation found that, based on the level of new funding from non-MFA donors, NIMD has demonstrated its **ability to mobilise resources** on the basis of the DfS programme. The evaluation therefore considers that the DfS programme has had a multiplier effect.

It is noted that this evaluation did not consider fundraising efforts throughout all country programmes (covering therefore also non-DfS country programmes). Neither did it conduct benchmarking with other organisations and programmes similar in nature and size. Therefore, the assessment below is restricted to the observed successful examples of resource mobilisation within the DfS country programmes.

The desk research and interviews with programme managers and country offices/partner organisations confirmed that country teams had managed to **secure additional funding** to support and expand country programme interventions during implementation of the DfS programme. This was also discussed in section 3.3.1 of this report. For example, NIMD **Colombia** during the implementation period secured additional funding from the EU and the Swedish Embassy. BLTP in **Burundi** secured funding from the EU, USAID and the Dutch Embassy. NIMD **Jordan** secured funding from the EU. Both CEMI in **Tunisia** and EECMD in **Ukraine** secured funding from the Dutch Embassy. The evaluation found that despite these additional resources, country offices/partner organisations do maintain a level of dependency on core MFA funding (received through NIMD in The Hague), as non-MFA funding does not constitute a continuous income to maintain sufficient levels of funding to finance all programme costs independently from NIMD financial support. For example, while both NIMD Colombia and Jordan managed high levels of non-MFA funding during the DfS programme, currently this funding has all but ended and the country programmes are therefore once more reliant on central funding, this time round provided by the PoD programme.

3.6 Internal learning

3.6.1 How learning informs the planning and delivery of results under the DfS programme

Follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the Mid-Term Review

The evaluation also looked at the degree to which NIMD followed-up on the recommendations made by the MTR. The evaluation found that six out of 21 recommendations can be considered completed, while the implementation of 14 recommendations is ongoing, and one recommendation has not been implemented yet. The desk research focused on NIMD management responses and updated action plans in response to the MTR recommendations, which the evaluators then cross-checked against available evidence. The evaluation considers that the large number of recommendations where implementation is still ongoing is explained by the longer timeline required for fully implementing these recommendations. Therefore, in those cases the evaluators subscribe to the MTR's recommendations and argue for the (continued) need for implementation.

The evaluators note that these findings are not built on a thorough evidence-base, as this topic was not prioritised for data collection and analysis. This is therefore not an exhaustive analysis, but a systematisation of progress made on follow-up actions gathered during the data collection on the related topics. Where relevant, the status of implementation of these recommendations has been reflected in the respective findings.

The table below provides an abbreviated overview of the recommendations, follow-up actions, status of implementation, as well as the evaluation's assessment of these.

Table 3.7 Overview of recommendations

Recommendation	NIMD follow-up action	Status (as reported by NIMD)	Evaluation assessment and response
1. Programme ToC			
1. Use programming experience systematically to test assumptions and refine ToC	Introduction ABPoCs	Completed	Completed; but recommendation continues to be valid
1.1 Use programme evidence and expertise more routinely in reflecting on the central ToC	Introduction ABPoCs, use of storytelling, outcome harvesting	Completed	Completed; but recommendation continues to be valid
1.2 Harness a more collective and shared understanding of the use of the layered ToCs	Introduction of ABPoC improves staff understanding of ToC	Completed	Completed; but recommendations continues to be valid
1.3 Not over-specify the contents of the ToC and how the ToC should be used	Country specific ToCs will continue to guide the planning of the country programmes	Ongoing	Ongoing; the evaluation agrees with the MTR recommendation
2. Political Economy Analysis			
2.1 Be clear on its intended use of PEA	Create framework guidance on use of PEA	Completed	Completed; no further action required
2.2 Use PEA as an approach, build on PM's expertise	Guidance delivered, PEA implementation ongoing	Ongoing	PEA has been rolled-out in country programmes under PoD; monitor quality of application of PEA.

Recommendation	NIMD follow-up action	Status (as reported by NIMD)	Evaluation assessment and response
2.3 Use PEA to identify entry-points for programming	Introduce stakeholder analysis software (used in Myanmar)	Ongoing	No further action required
3. Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency			
3.1 Experiment with indicators and frameworks for designing, monitoring and evaluating behaviour change	Introduction of OH closes the monitoring gap between intermediate and outcome indicators, and captures especially behavioural change	Ongoing	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid
3.2 Experiment with other innovative methodologies for assessing contribution and integrate qualitative methodologies into the PM&E framework	Use CA in MTRs and FE of SPDD and DfS programmes	Completed	Completed; but recommendation continues to be valid
4. Knowledge and strategic relations			
4 Connect positioning efforts based on knowledge-base/ understanding what country programmes are doing	Organise thematic learning sessions around these issues to capture better what is ongoing around these issues	Ongoing (included in learning weeks)	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid
4.1 Make a strategic overview of all of NIMD's projects describing the most politically sensitive issues	Use human interest stories and mid-year reports to focus on issues	Ongoing (part of playbook approach)	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid
4.2 Create teams with programme, KSR and country teams	Create integrated clusters in regional meeting and HQ monthly cluster meetings	Ongoing	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid
4.3 Implement playbook to learn internally on approaches	Organize Playbook sessions; roll-out OH, publish content	Not implemented	Recommendation continues to be valid
4.4 Use internal evidence as the basis for external positioning	Analyse the gaps in our information sheets and track-record descriptions and start filling them; compile and develop factsheets and overviews of projects or themes	Ongoing	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid
5. Fundraising and positioning			
5.1 Undertake market analysis and establish businessplan	New Business Development Advisor contracted; he/she will develop a positioning strategy identifying key donors	Ongoing	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid

Recommendation	NIMD follow-up action	Status (as reported by NIMD)	Evaluation assessment and response
5.2 Clarify NIMD's niche and USPs	Part of strategic revision; MAP 2021-2025	Completed	Completed; no further comments
5.3 Develop a positioning strategy	Business Development Advisor to draft a positioning strategy (also to incorporate in communications and showcase in events)	Ongoing	Ongoing; recommendation continues to be valid
5.4 Build positioning approach around political acumen	Agreed, but also specifying rights-based approaches, accountability, transparency, etc.	Ongoing	Ongoing; agreed with NIMD comments.
6. Strategic recommendations			
6.1. Develop its internal learning as a way of connecting the Knowledge and Strategic Relations team with the programme teams	Strengthen the internal learning loop for country programme teams, by fitting in the new PEA approach, and reviewing country programme results and the newly-formulated actor-based pathways	Ongoing	Ongoing; agreed with NIMD comments.
6.2 Distil knowledge and turn it into publications and products couched in terms of a 'playbook approach'.	Pilot playbook approach	Ongoing	Ongoing; agreed with NIMD comments.
6.3 NIMDs strategy and positioning need to be built around its internal programming strengths, derived from its track record and its political experience	See under 5	Ongoing	Ongoing; agreed with NIMD comments.

Efficiency and relevance of NIMD's internal learning loops for the (country) programmes adaptation/impact

Learning is **innate** to the nature and type of work that NIMD does, and happens organically throughout programme implementation. However, the evaluation found that internal learning loops were **semi-formalised** and do not follow a **structured process**. While country offices/partner organisations steer their programmes based on what they have learned about the realities of the respective implementation contexts, this learning is **not well documented and reflected** in NIMD's programme management tools (i.e. the ToC, ABPoCs and programme reports). The evaluators also found that it is not clear how NIMD intends to feed-back learning into its organisational knowledge and practice-base.

The evaluation found that each country office/partner organisation determines their own processes for local teams to (jointly) review and analyse progress and impact of implementation of the country programme interventions. In the case of NIMD **Colombia**, for example, interviews with the country

team evidenced that the country office organised team meetings on a quarterly basis with the objective to assess the ongoing relevance of interventions, analyse the implementation context and make decisions about the need for revisions to the interventions. While this can be seen to be tied to the PME process, the county team stated that this was a key moment where local staff share information and insights on the reality of implementing the activities, presenting the team with a platform and opportunity to learn collectively. In the case of NIMD **Jordan**, interviews with the country team revealed that learning takes place intuitively and on an ad-hoc basis, for example, during the regular communication with the respective programme manager in The Hague. The evaluation considers this to be evidence of functional and open channels, both within country teams and between country teams and The Hague, where lessons and insights are exchanged in an ad-hoc manner and learning takes place, in its broadest sense. Interviews with programme managers and with the KSR team also revealed that NIMD had set-up learning events to take place every 6-months, but that these were not used. Interviews with staff from the KSR team also specified that four regional meetings were organised in the fall of 2019 to gather country office/partner organisations' feedback on learning needs. The evaluation thus identifies various moments and spaces to discuss learning, but that these do appear to follow a formalised, structured approach towards learning.

In addition to (planned) events that have a dedicated or partial focus on learning, NIMD also organises training events, as part of its Knowledge and Innovation agenda and as part of the roll-out of PME (e.g. on the use of ToC and ABPoCs, indicator measurement and outcome harvesting). Interviews with country teams revealed that while they acknowledge the relevance of these events for instructional purposes, they consider this one-way learning. One country team interviewed commented that these events provide useful information and guidance, but offer little space for exchange and (mutual) learning. Interviews with programme managers also revealed that they consider that two-way learning had not yet been established.

Learning need not be the prerogative of The Hague only. Interviews with staff from the KSR team also revealed that learning is understood as an individual responsibility and need not be instigated solely by initiative from The Hague. This resonates with how learning at country-level has taken place in practice. In one particular case, NIMD **Colombia** commented that the country office was approached by other offices in the Latin American region to share lessons and information on project management and financial administration guidelines. According to NIMD Colombia, this exchange was coordinated between the Latin American country offices directly.

While learning is overall acknowledged as an important component of programme management, there is a frank recognition by country teams that this so has been considered a **peripheral priority** next to programme management exigencies. This means that learning is seen as a 'luxury' and is in practice contingent upon country teams having the ability the plan for learning events and to allocate their time to it. Its relevance notwithstanding, learning is difficult to prioritise in complex work environments and with high work-levels.

The evaluation found no documented evidence that learning has led to programme adaptations or impact. As previously discussed as part of the evaluation's analysis of revisions to the programme ToC and ABPoCs, critical reflections on the viability of change pathways were only to a very limited extent reflected in these project management tools. Interviews with country teams confirmed that the main channels for communicating with The Hague on insights and learning are the annual reports, which have a dedicated section on learning. The evaluation considers however that this is a suboptimal way of learning, as this does not ensure that these insights and lessons are comprehended, assessed on its value and are taken up correspondingly to be disseminated and incorporated across the organisation. One country team interviewed acknowledged that they do not

know how The Hague uses this knowledge and how this feeds into a corporate learning process. The evaluation thus considers that the learning loop cannot be considered to be 'closed.'

At the same time, the evaluation places a disclaimer that the lack of cited examples does not imply that learning *de facto* does not influence programme adaptations and, eventually, programme impact. Quite the contrary, the evaluation considers that learning is innate to the way that country offices/partner organisations operate their country programmes. It is therefore likely that this learning is rather not made explicit and documented as part of the rationale for programme revisions. The evaluation considers this to present **a risk to the organisation**, as the collective lessons and insights gained from programme implementation hold significant value for NIMD as this represents in essence the organisation's expertise on how to manage these types of programmes in these types of political contexts.

NIMD's DfS experiences, lessons, insights gained during the duration of the programme

The evaluation found that NIMD did not follow a structured process to integrate DfS experiences, lessons and insights into DfS programming, thus underutilising the potential represented by NIMD staff's expertise. One positive exception has been the work around harmonising NIMD's work on Democracy Schools, with has covered topics such as the curriculum of the democracy schools, alumni management, common measurement on progress and impact. This has subsequently been rolled out as part of the regional exchange on democracy schools, where CEMI shared its experience from the Tunisia programme to inform activities of the Democracy School programme in Jordan. A global conference was organised in Georgia in 2018 on this topic. In 2019, this knowledge was also used to inform setting up democracy schools in Ethiopia.

While there is a wealth of expertise, the lack of a structured process to collect, collate and analyse these experience and insights, exposes NIMD to the risk that expertise remains inside the heads of people, thus not making full use to integrate this into the organisations' knowledge and practice-base.

Learning around country selection decisions and "exploratory activities"

The evaluation looked into how NIMD has engaged in new countries, through pilots or exploratory activities, what considerations lay at basis for decision-making to enter/exit these countries and what can be learned from this.

The evaluation notes that these findings are not built on a thorough evidence-base, as this topic was not prioritised for data collection and analysis. This is therefore not an exhaustive analysis, but a reflection of the practice as has been reconstructed by the evaluators amidst the analysis of adjoining criteria, such as effectiveness and sustainability. The evaluation established that NIMD has **clear criteria** for assessing the viability of initiating a country programme, namely: (1) a political environment conducive to work with stakeholders; (2) a perceived need for NIMD's service offer; and (3) an added value of NIMD within the development partner landscape. The evaluation found that NIMD reassesses these criteria periodically at management level to confirm the **ongoing viability** of country programmes. The evaluation also found that NIMD has demonstrated a willingness to explore new programme countries (e.g. South Sudan, Venezuela, Iraq), even where implementation conditions are clearly challenging. Interviews with NIMD management evidenced that the decisions for entering into a new programme country are well thought through, as NIMD typically engages long-term in a country. In interviews with NIMD staff in The Hague and at country-level it also became clear that NIMD's work requires well-established and trustworthy relations with the main political (and civic) stakeholders. Despite the ambition to engage long-term, NIMD will draw-down and cease operations once it has become clear that the country programme is not viable anymore. In the case of the DfS programme, the evaluation found that the decisions to halt exploratory activities in the cases of South Sudan, Lebanon and Kurdistan/Iraq were well founded,

as the business case for engaging did not comply anymore with the criteria outlined above, either due to the unavailability of a conducive environment (e.g. security in South Sudan, political status of Kurdistan region) or due to the impossibility to work across the full range of political actors (Lebanon).

In terms of learning around country selection decisions, the evaluation found NIMD's criteria for entering a new country are sound, but that the subsequent development of exploratory activities into full-fledged country programmes is highly dependent on the ability to find firm footing in the country, which has proven to be notoriously hard in volatile and unpredictable contexts such as FCAS. The evidence shows that the majority of pilot countries have not matured into full programme countries (e.g. South Sudan, Kurdistan/Iraq, Lebanon). The Jordan programme has set important bases for work in the country and will now continue under the PoD programme, despite the evident challenges presented by the national government. NIMD will use NIMD Jordan to further build the MENA regional programme. The evaluation considers that it is still too early to assess the success or failure of the Venezuela pilot, as these activities were only initiated in 2019. The evaluation also found that NIMD, while supported by a clear and rational business case for engaging in these new countries, demonstrates a considerable risk appetite to do so. However, the evaluation considers that NIMD has not established a clear plan to draw-down activities once the decision is taken to halt further activities. The evaluation considers that this is an area where NIMD can learn from its experience based on the conducted pilots and plan for the minimal strengthened structures and dividends they wish to leave behind.

3.6.2 *Use of partnership with the MFA for implementation of the DfS programme*
As the main donor for the DfS programme, the MFA and in particular DSH represents an important partner for NIMD. The relationship between the two parties for the DfS programme needs to be read in the context of the broader framework of the NIMD-MFA cooperation which has been presented in Chapter 1 of this report.

The evaluation has assessed the nature of the NIMD-MFA partnership from a two-fold perspective: on the one hand looking at the overarching strategic relationship at central-level, namely between NIMD in The Hague and the DSH; and on the other hand, assessing the relationship between embassies and country offices/partner organisations on the ground.

Partnership with the MFA within DfS
The findings of this evaluation broadly align with those of the 2018 MTR with regard to the appreciation of the MFA's flexibility with financial management and reporting requirements, which facilitates NIMD in the implementation of adaptive programming; and the overall relevance and alignment of the DfS programme with the broader DSH strategic objective to promote inclusive governance a part of its policy and ToC on SRoL in FCAS. Both parties have recognised the mutually beneficial nature of the relationship: NIMD is seen as a strategic partner for the implementation of the inclusive governance component of the MFAs SRoL agenda, as it is seen as capable of delivering visible and tangible results (one of the examples mentioned by interviewed DSH stakeholders was the Democracy Schools), but also through its in-depth knowledge of the country context NIMD can provide the embassies with access to intelligence on the ground. This way, MFA staff can tap into political networks which they might otherwise not be privy too.

Overall, this evaluation finds that the relationship at central level between NIMD the Hague and DSH can generally be considered very positive. This was confirmed by interviews with DSH representatives and DfS programme managers, as well as by the evaluators' desk review of DSH approval letter of annual plans and reports, and minutes of biannual strategic policy meetings. Nevertheless, although interviewed representatives from both DSH and NIMD confirmed that the relationship has indeed matured over time, there is no evidence to confirm it has yet reached a true

strategic nature. In particular, as indicated by an interviewed DSH representative, although the strategic aspect of the partnership with NIMD is clear to DSH, it is less so for the MFA as a whole and understanding the added value of NIMD in that broader context. The evaluators' assessment of the minutes of the biannual strategic policy meetings is also that these remain technical conversations around programme implementation, rather than broader strategic conversations on opportunities for the future or the development of a joint agenda.

Some elements of friction between DSH and NIMD also exist. On the one hand, according to interviewed representatives, DSH feels that additional reflections and transparency on the successes and failures, in particular, of the DfS programme could be warranted. Although annual reporting is considered to be adequate, and responding to the lean reporting structure requested by DSH (8-page limit), it can remain superficial. The evaluators' own desk review of these documents tends to align with this assessment: more thorough descriptions of the challenges faced, critical reflections on the decision taken at intervention level and their results, a review of whether contextual blockages could have been foreseen and avoided, for example, would contribute to strengthening the reporting narrative and the learning cycle – not only for NIMD, but also for DSH. This could apply not only to internal learning, but also to learning from other organisations, and how they overcome similar challenges – something which, according to DSH representatives, they have not seen much in practice. On another note, although there is strong thematic alignment between the two organisations, the same is not necessarily true from a geographic perspective, according to interviewed NIMD staff at central level. What are priority countries for DSH might not be for NIMD: continued financial dependency from the MFA and DSH in particular could influence NIMD's decisions on where to focus its programmes and interventions, which in turn could limit the organisations' ambition to become a global player in the field of democracy support and political party assistance. Therefore, it is important for NIMD to retain a certain degree of autonomy in setting its programmatic and geographical priorities. Although there is mutual understanding that, to some degree, the two parties need each other, the unspoken challenge is understanding how to strike the necessary balance so that the inherent nature of each is maintained without substantial sacrifices on own ambitions and goals.

The impression resulting from conversations with both DSH and NIMD representatives is that, while recognising that each reaps benefits form the other's work, there is a lack of clarity on both sides as to what the purpose of the relationship is, and what each party wants to obtain from it. If, as expected, the MFA is to remain one of NIMD's primary financial donors over the course of the next few years, joint discussions on this key aspect are necessary, so that an effective strategic agenda can be developed.

DSH stance towards adaptive programming
The evaluation finds that NIMD values MFA support not only financially but also because of the flexibility of arrangements, which allows the organisation to continue working with adaptive programming and less traditional ways of reporting. The elements of flexibility within DfS, in particular with regard to the opportunity to explore new countries through pilot projects, e.g. South Sudan, Iraq, or Lebanon, emerged as a very positive feature during interviews with DfS programme managers at central level. The interviewed programme manager for Burundi also confirmed that, compared to other donors present in the country, for example, the MFA stands out for being on the high end of the 'flexibility spectrum'. As already reported in the 2018 MTR and further confirmed by the interviews with DfS programme managers carried out for this final evaluation, the MFA's flexible approach has also allowed NIMD to use DfS funding as leverage for attracting other donors to continue or expand the implementation of activities. This has been the case, for example, of Colombia, Burundi, Jordan and Tunisia.

MFA flexibility was confirmed also with regard to communicating adaptive programming decisions. Interviewed DfS programme managers reported that, although major changes such as halting programme activities do need to be communicated in advance, minor changes can take place without prior approval, as long as they are reported and explained afterwards. One of the interviewees indicated that reporting on changes has often been inconsistent, and that sometimes traceability was difficult. Although this was not specifically mentioned as an issue during interviews with the DSH representatives, it aligns with their request for more thorough reflections on failures and programme adaptations in writing.

Cooperation between NIMD and the embassies

The evaluation findings show that, to a vast extent, the substantive relationship described at central level is also visible at decentralised level. The basic principles are the same: as already hinted at in the paragraphs above, NIMD country offices and local partners provide embassy staff with access to otherwise difficult-to-access political networks and expert analysis of ongoing and expected contextual developments and, in turn, when this mechanism works best, embassies provide NIMD staff and activities with additional visibility and recognition which can be used also to explore additional funding. One of the key examples in this regard mentioned by interviewed DSH staff is Ukraine. Although Ukraine is not considered a priority country for DSH, and therefore little investment would have gone into it otherwise, its inclusion in the DfS programme has resulted in the access by embassy staff in Kyiv to a broader network of contacts and information. The embassy in Kyiv has demonstrated its support to NIMD's work in Ukraine by providing funding to its partner organisation EECMD (based in Georgia) to continue the activities related to the Democracy Schools beyond 2020.

Both interviewed DSH representatives and DfS programme managers report that the relationship with the embassies has strengthened over the last few years. According to DfS programme managers, the political nature of the DfS programme (as well as of the SPDD programme) has naturally led to an increased investment in fostering a positive interaction with embassies. DSH confirms this investment has been visible. Throughout the evaluation, however, it has clearly emerged that the level of interaction varies significantly from country to country along a spectrum of possibilities, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3.2   Spectrum of interaction with embassies across programme countries

Amongst NIMD country programmes with the highest degrees of involvement with embassies, Ukraine and Burundi have been able to secure additional funding directly from the embassies directly. As discussed above, in Ukraine, this meant the possibility to continue DfS activities (i.e. the Democracy Schools), which would otherwise have ended. In Burundi, embassy funding allowed to finance a separate project with BLTP. Interviewed BLTP representatives confirmed that the relationship with the embassy is very positive and takes place both through formal and informal meetings. This was also confirmed by the interviewed embassy representative. In Jordan, the positive relationship with the embassy has been instrumental for obtaining the necessary registration to open the NIMD country office. For Tunisia, which sits in the middle of the spectrum, the interviewed Programme Manager indicated that there are regular informal interactions, but no substantial involvement as the embassy is already closely linked to NIMD's implementing partner CEMI through other projects, which are used as main channels for communication. For Colombia,

which sits in the lower end of the spectrum, embassy representatives have indicated that interaction is limited to reading progress report, sustaining meetings and attending some events. No strategic level interaction exists, despite the recognition that the programme is closely aligned with the Multi Annual Country Strategy (MACS). The NIMD country office in Colombia reported that the level of interaction decreased with staff turnover at the embassy, as well as the embassy's preferred focus on thematic areas such as transitional justice, truth commission and victims, rather than democratic development.

A combination of factors can explain the different degrees of interaction across this spectrum. On the one hand, DfS programme managers have indicated that it is also dependent on personal interests and affinity between NIMD and embassy staff. The geopolitical context may also play a role: in countries where there is less international attention (also visible in the reduced interest from international donors, which is the case of Burundi), there can be more exposure, also at embassy level. This could contribute to explaining the higher level of strategic awareness and hands-on involvement. One critical factor that can affect the level of interaction is the fact that embassies formally have no role in the DfS programme: this makes it difficult, in practice, to take on concrete additional workload, as there is often a lack of resources. In these cases, the decision to become involved beyond semi-regular exchanges of information becomes necessarily dependent on the will and personality of local staff.

With positive results being context dependent and staff-dependent, this evaluation finds that a situation similar to the one reported in section 3.2.2 on knowledge and learning has taken place. Especially for those countries where the interaction is at the highest degrees of the spectrum, some level of mutual learning and strategic discussions to inform interventions will have taken place. However, this remains not visible nor systematised, and seems to have not fed back into the NIMD learning loop between country and central-level. This is, in the eyes of the evaluators, a missed opportunity. A concrete strategy for implementation that includes embassies early on, deriving from an understanding of the overall aim of the MFA-NIMD relationship, as discussed above, can help redress the situation and level the degrees of interaction across programme countries, in order to avoid situations of detachment, such as with the experience outlined above for Colombia.

4 Conclusions

This chapter provides an overview of the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings presented in this report. The conclusions are presented following the same structure as Chapter 3, and will address the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, programme ToC, knowledge and innovation agenda and strategic fundraising and positioning, and finally internal learning.

Effectiveness

The evaluation concludes that DfS interventions are considered to be relevant and respond to in-country needs. NIMD is generally recognised by other development organisations, as well as local institutions, as a valuable and capable player in all DfS countries, with the attributability of the results achieved broadly confirmed.

The DfS programme has overall effectively achieved results that are linked to the outcome areas identified in both the DfS and the individual countries' programme documents. Interventions aimed at **facilitating interparty and multi-stakeholder dialogues** effectively fostered the establishment of relationships between representatives of opposing parties; promoted conflict mediation and dialogue skills; and promoted peaceful conflict resolution methods. In some cases, the facilitated dialogues have led to the formulation of joint policy statements, or the adoption of relevant legislative acts, therefore contributing to more inclusive policy development. **Training and capacity building activities** with political parties have, with some identified differences between programme countries, effectively strengthened the organisational capacities of parties. Differences in the level of effectiveness across countries are also dependent on the respective political systems, as systems which remain closed prevent the effective functioning of parties in practice, even if their capacities have been strengthened. The trainings have also contributed to improving parties' understanding of their national political systems and of their role and positioning in it. Finally, the **Democracy Schools** implemented across DfS programme countries have effectively enhanced participants' understanding and knowledge of the political system, including their national system; strengthened soft skills and transmitted the values of dialogue and peaceful coexistence; and fostered increased interaction across party lines, as well as with other relevant actors in the political ecosystem, e.g. civic actors. In some cases, the Schools have led to the establishment of groups of alumni who take the lead in the implementation of own projects and activities; in other cases, alumni have felt encouraged and enabled to run in local or national elections, often with success.

Against the background of these positive achievements, it should also be noted that, as a result of the **contextual challenges linked to working in FCAS** and the related use of adaptive programming, the originally planned outcomes have not always been achieved. This is in part attributable to the fact that the DfS outcomes have been formulated in an ambitious and broad manner, which provides the necessary flexibility to capture results within the outcome formulation. NIMD's interventions still show a significant contribution in terms of progress towards the outcome identified. Still, the evaluators conclude that non-alignment with initial results frameworks risks complicating NIMD's accountability relationship vis-à-vis its donors.

From the perspective of the design of the DfS programme and its implementation, this final evaluation further concludes that, while the **overall system-actor-culture ToC and its assumptions** have held up, the implementation of interventions against these levels is to some extent artificial. Activities and tools that typically belong to one level have been used (depending on country context needs and limitations) for work that has been reported under other levels. Similarly,

indicators that in the broader DfS framework are used to report progress against one level are used in some countries to measure and report progress against a different level. This not only affects the aggregability of results and analysis of effectiveness of level specific work, but also hampers learning by implementing partners. This is particularly evident in light of the fact that, in reality, the three levels do not exist in silos, but rather are interlinked and mutually reinforcing/contributing (political ecosystem).

To some extent, the DfS programme has also allowed to identify which approaches do and do not **work in FCAS**. It has evidenced that it is important to be embedded in the local context and to establish a network of influence with key programme stakeholders for ensuring, on the one hand, continuity in implementation of activities and higher chances of sustainability of results, on the other; that work at system and actor level are the most vulnerable to the political context; and that election cycles can affect activities but also be useful opportunities to raise awareness about the organisations' work. These elements can be useful to inform future planning in these types of contexts. However, there is little evidence of this information being systematically collected and feeding into future planning cycles.

Finally, the evaluation concludes that more can be done to systematically incorporate **gender** in NIMD interventions. There is general attention to the inclusion of gender quotas for participation in Democracy Schools; including in the curricula gender and inclusivity aspects; and highlighting women success stories. However, limited steps are taken to ensure meaningful (i.e. impactful) participation of women to activities. There is currently limited evidence of concrete impact on eliminating barriers to access to women participation in the political system. The evaluation recognises that this could be in part attributable to the fact that such changes require time to become visible. Despite increasing attention and awareness raising on the importance of gender and inclusiveness work, the evaluation concludes that more can be done also to ensure overarching learning by NIMD on gender, including gender in FCAS, in particular by ensuring that standardised data on interventions at country level related to women inclusion are brought together systematically.

Efficiency

Due to the low level of data rigour assigned to this criterion, the evaluation established a limited evidence-base for the findings. Mostly important, the evaluation does not benchmark the DfS programme against other organisations or programmes similar in nature and size. Therefore, the evaluation cannot establish a referential framework to qualify the findings. At the same time, the evaluation does conclude that the financial execution of the DfS programme stayed within normal parameters, thus not raising any concerns on the planning and delivery of financial resources.

Sustainability

The evaluation concludes that there is a certain degree of sustainability with regard to the programmatic results of DfS. This in particular is due to the high perception of local ownership of interventions and results by both local implementers (country staff/partner organisations) and beneficiaries, as well as to the proven ability to mobilise resources. NIMD's long-term approach to fostering change in the target countries, therefore without a clear entry/exit strategy, is recognised. However, it remains unclear how the relevance of the programme is assessed in order to scale down activities in the target countries, should the need arise.

The evaluation also concludes that, apart from providing standard training on planning, monitoring and evaluation, and financial management, there has been no concerted effort from NIMD central level to strengthen the capacities of local partners and country offices in a tailor-made manner, and with a view to filling gaps identified during DfS inception phase. Organisational capacities of local partners and country offices were found to vary from country to country.

Finally, with regard to the impact of COVID-19, the evaluation concludes that NIMD has been able to successfully adapt its interventions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the pandemic has not significantly affected the realisation of programmatic results. Across DfS countries, several different (innovative) approaches tailored to the local needs were implemented to ensure a degree of continuity in activities; unforeseen activities were also included in some countries to foster learning about pandemic-related challenges and impacts and to ensure dialogue continued to take place even in the face of physical restrictions. It remains too early to assess whether there has been long-lasting impact on the political contexts of DfS programme countries as result of the pandemic.

Programme ToC

The evaluation concludes that the programme ToC, in its current design, serves its purpose for use in country programmes, but does not allow for a clear understanding of the change pathways the country programmes are pursuing. The evaluation considers that this limited articulation and detail constrains the practical use of the ToC. While intended outcomes as outlined in the programme ToC remain valid, the identified constraints in effect limit the use of the ToC to steer programming towards these outcomes. The use of separate ToCs at the system, actor and culture levels has in practice led to stratified approaches for each level, which is furthermore deemed artificial considering the interconnectedness between these levels.

The evaluation further concludes that the combined package consisting of programme ToC and ABPoCs at country-level offer a complete overview of change pathways, but are perceived as complex in their practical use. In practice, ToC and ABPoCs are two tools. While intended to be used in conjunction, it is difficult to see the practicality of both as part of one coherent 'package'. They make the change pathways more complete, but also more complex and risk becoming unwieldy.

While the evaluation identified conceptual and practical challenges around the use of the programme ToC and ABPoCs as primary adaptive programming "tools", the adaptive programming process that NIMD has established is functional, in that programme adaptions are *de facto* taking place in line with the identified contextual challenges.

Most notably, the evaluation concludes that the rationale for (major) programme adaptations is insufficiently documented. This takes away the "paper trail" detailing where, and most importantly, why adaptive programming is taking place. This limits the opportunity for NIMD to learn from this practice and further develop it within NIMD, as this omits (documented) reference points that allow NIMD to measure and assess whether the adaptations have improved the delivery of results. The evaluation considers that this will be an important step towards establish an evidence-base for determining 'what works' and 'what does not work.'

Knowledge and innovation agenda; strategic fundraising and positioning

The evaluation concludes that the NIMD Knowledge and Innovation agenda has demonstrated its potential to support building up the organisation's knowledge and practice-base, but limitations in capacities and in implementation did not allow NIMD to fully deliver on its ambitions. Particularly, the connection of the knowledge agenda to inventoried country needs and priorities was signalled as an area for improvement. While the evaluation acknowledged that the Knowledge and Innovation agenda included both 'supply-driven' and 'demand-driven' components, the way the latter component was articulated (or lack thereof) during implementation has been determinant in how NIMDs knowledge efforts were perceived by DfS programme countries.

Taking into account the considerable capacity constraints to pursue such a demand-driven knowledge agenda, the evaluation considers the glass 'half full' with regard to the overall efforts during DfS implementation and also acknowledges that the MAP 2021-2025 has set the right direction for further grounding the knowledge agenda in what country offices wish and need to thrive as country offices/partner organisations.

Due to the low level of data rigour assigned to the topics of fundraising and positioning, the evaluation established a limited evidence-base for the findings. The evaluation therefore also did not benchmark NIMDs fundraising and positioning efforts against other organisations and programmes similar in nature and size. While the evaluation finds that overall fundraising and positioning efforts show positive contributions towards building NIMDs position and expanding its donor-base, the lack of further available data makes that the evaluation falls short in confidently assessing whether the volume, level and quality of these efforts have been commensurate with NIMDs stated ambition. The evaluation could also not assess whether these efforts are implemented in the pace that would allow the organisation to distinctively position itself based on its unique value offer in an increasingly growing competitive market to access donor funding. For this reason, the evaluation refrains from drawing conclusions.

Internal learning

The evaluation concludes that learning is evidently innate to the way NIMD works. While learning clearly happens in a natural and ad-hoc manner throughout the organisation and also throughout implementation of the DfS programme, the way the "learning practice" is currently set-up does not allow NIMD to capture the learning happening within the organisation and consolidate this as part of its knowledge and practice base. As also confirmed by partner and external stakeholders, the evaluation acknowledges that NIMD staff, both at The Hague and country-levels, is recognised for the experience and expertise they bring to the field and is therefore rightly considered to be one of the organisation's main assets. The unavailability of a structured learning process therefore presents a risk that NIMD will not be able to fully capitalise on this potential. In light of NIMDs ambition to position itself as a thought and practice leader within its particular niche in the development partner landscape, the ability consolidate this knowledge and practice-base is considered to be cornerstone for further growth in this area.

With regard to the partnership between NIMD and the MFA, the evaluation concludes that, at central level, the relationship between NIMD and MFA (DSH) is very positive and has matured over time towards being more strategic. However, a true strategic partnership has not yet been achieved, as further evidenced by the fact that regular bi-annual 'strategy' meetings are mostly focusing on the operational (i.e. programme implementation and progress) and less on the strategic level. The strategic relationship between NIMD and the MFA more broadly also remains under question. At country level, the use of the possibilities for cooperation between country staff and embassies have not yet been fully explored. Although the relationships with the embassies have visibly improved throughout the implementation of DfS, also thanks to proactive outreach by NIMD staff, discrepancies with the level and type of engagement across programme countries remain visible. The evaluators recognise that such differences are also party attributable to the personality and interest of individual embassy staff, and acknowledge that frequent turnover can affect the establishment of long term, strategic relationships at country level. Further reflection, however, is warranted on how to capitalise from the lessons learned in those countries where the interaction is on the highest level of the spectrum.

Finally, the evaluation concludes that the MFA's (DSH) flexibility has contributed to facilitating NIMD's implementation of adaptive programming under DfS, as well as progressing towards broadening the organisation's donor landscape. Further reflections on the reasons underpinning

adaptive programming choices however would be beneficial for both DSH and NIMD organisational learning purposes.

5 Recommendations

This chapter provides an overview of the recommendations suggested by this evaluation, in line with the identified findings and conclusions. Where relevant, the recommendations have been divided specifically according to their target group (i.e. NIMD central level, NIMD country office/local partners, the MFA/DSH).

Effectiveness

Content-related recommendations

1. In order to ensure increased effectiveness of interventions, NIMD (country staff and local partners) should:
   a. Ensure election cycles and the related challenges (limited availability of political parties, etc) are factored into the planning and leveraged as opportunities to promote NIMD's work.
   b. Work, including through the maintenance of formal (e.g. establishment of focal points within institutions) and informal contacts (regular bilateral conversations) towards ensuring a) participation of the ruling party; and b) participation of the correct target group (i.e. party leadership and not regular members) to activities.
   c. Strengthen partnerships with local partners in order to design interventions in a comprehensive manner, i.e. touching on elements, such as socio-economic conditions, that affect work at system level.
   d. In cases where formal platforms for dialogue are established, continue to foster interaction outside the platform as well, with a view to ensuring sustainability of results.
   e. In the context of capacity building of political parties, develop plans for short-term, medium or long-term support based on the baseline assessment of organisational strength (or weakness) of the parties targeted. Where possible, ensure use of teams of trainers composed by members of opposing parties as a way to provide concrete examples of dialogue and cooperation.
   f. In the context of Democracy Schools, consider restricting the number of students per class to around 25, as smaller groups were found to be more prone to internalising the values and skills acquired. Ensure engagement through homework, assignments and close follow-up with alumni.
   g. Ensure the Schools' curricula are closely linked to the practical issues affecting the countries where they are implemented, and tailored to the local context
   h. Continue fostering peer exchanges at local, regional and international level
   i. Ensure that gender and inclusivity are included in country programmes both by mainstreaming as well as through specific intervention.

Process and learning-related recommendations

1. In order to guarantee accountability towards donor organisations, when designing future programmes and outlining the activities supporting implementation, NIMD (central level) should consider more clearly outlining the results' chain between interventions and intended outcomes[93].

2. In order to ensure clearer reporting, improve aggregability of results and increase learning from the implementation of its interventions, NIMD (central level) should refrain from using the system-actor-culture structure for reporting and planning purposes. The system-actor-culture

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[93] See also the recommendations on the use of ToC and APBoCs.

structure can be maintained within the organisation for internal guidance and steering on a strategic level.

3. In order to ensure learning from the DfS experience in FCAS, NIMD (central level) should systematically identify and validate key conditions to take into account when working in FCAS through a mapping exercise that can follow these steps:

    a. Collect these examples through desk research, looking at individual country documents (annual reports, internal communication, etc.).

    b. Validate the examples identified in conversations with local staff during designated Focus Group Discussions. These conversations can be included as part of NIMD regular meetings with country staff as part of the overall learning process.

    c. Validate the examples identified through the desk research, and confirmed with country staff, with staff at central level.

    d. Record in writing the information collected and validated for future monitoring and learning purposes (e.g. as part of the Playbook suggested by the MTR)

4. In order to improve aggregability of results as well as learning on gender-related interventions implemented, NIMD (central and country level) should ensure that gender disaggregated data is systematically recorded for all interventions implemented, and that information on interventions at country level on gender are collected systematically through the progress reporting. This, with a view to ensuring the knowledge goes beyond country-level and feeds into the organisational learning process.

Efficiency

Due to the low level of data rigour assigned to this criterion, the evaluation established a limited evidence-base for the findings. Mostly important, as stated in the chapter on findings on efficiency, this did not allow the evaluation to benchmark the DfS programme against other organisations or programmes similar in nature and size. Therefore, the evaluation did not establish a referential framework to qualify the findings. As a result, the evaluation will refrain from making specific recommendations on improving efficiency.

Sustainability

1. In order to ensure sustainability of programmatic results, NIMD (central and country level) should introduce the definition and application of 'criteria for the continuation of work' as part of (country) programme design and implementation. These criteria can be developed as part of the Political Economy Analysis (PEA), and revisited during this periodical exercise. The criteria are intended to keep track of progress towards outcomes, keep the pulse on ongoing fundraising efforts, and capacity development of country offices/local partners, as a way of ensuring there are adequate measures in place to maintain local ownership.

2. With a view to ensuring that local implementers have the capacity to continue the interventions once NIMD support fades out, NIMD (central) should provide capacity development support (in addition to standard M&E and financial management training) that is tailored to the needs of the local partner/country office. The creation of tailor-made plan for capacity development would go hand in hand with the design and implementation of 'criteria for the continuation of work', in line with what stated above on maintaining local ownership. This investment would also align with the decentralisation objective stated in the new Multi-Annual Plan (MAP).

3. In order to capitalise on the lessons learned from adapting programme interventions in response to a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, NIMD (central and country level) should undertake a systematic review of the challenges faced by the local teams, the mitigating measures and the adaptations implemented and to compile that in a paper. Additionally, a focus

on COVID-19-related impact could be included in next country PEA assessments in order to obtain a better understanding on possible long-term effects on the local political contexts.

Programme ToC

1. In order to allow NIMD to understand how key interventions produce sequential and incremental changes along the results chain, adapt the ToC so that this articulates the results' chain (inputs, outputs, intermediate outcomes, outcomes). This should be done with priority at the level of country programme ToCs as this is where changes will be able to show direct impact on NIMD's ability to steer interventions towards achieving results. This would then also allow NIMD to specify assumptions for each results' level, so that staff in country offices/partner organisations can test and refine assumptions at the levels where the country programme interventions take place. Also, the PME unit is recommended to prepare guidance to facilitate this exercise and to develop a 'proxy' country programme ToC. This should focus on the form of the ToC, not on its content as this falls within the purview of the country offices/partner organisations. Such a sample ToC can then be used as a 'standard' against which country teams, with guidance from the PME unit, can then further develop their ToCs[94].

2. It is recommended to integrate the defined change pathways at the system, actor and culture-levels into 1 single programme ToC for each country-level. Ideally, this should also include integrating the ABPoC into this singular programme ToC at country-level. On a cautionary note, the evaluators appreciate that this action may be considered too soon by NIMD considering the limited timeframe both NIMD staff in The Hague and at country-level have had to become acquainted and comfortable with the use of the ABPoCs. In the scenario where NIMD desires to continue with the use of ABPoCs, the PME unit and/or the programme managers should become more involved in joint revisions of the country-level ABPoCs with the respective country teams to discuss jointly progress against individual ABPoCs, analyse constraints in achieving (further) progress, reflect on the implications for the viability of ABPoCs and revise these to reflect required changes, where warranted.

3. In order to ensure local ownership of the country programme's ToC, the PME unit is recommended to closely involve country offices/partner organisations in the design process of (future) ToCs, as part of country programme design.

4. Finally, country offices/partner organisations are recommended to more systematically document the rationale for (major) revisions and reflect these in annual reports. This also puts responsibility on the programme managers to ensure that this is done, as they are closely involved in monitoring the country programmes and advising and supporting their implementation and are therefore well apprised of the challenges and how the country programme can best adapt to address these. The PME unit should analyse the quality of these rationales and systematise centrally in which circumstances these adaptations take place and how programme interventions are adapted. Later on, the effect (success/failure) of these adaptations can then be cross cross-checked against the intended effect these adaptations were to have. Throughout the year, the PME unit should monitor the quality of the rationale to ensure this serves both NIMD's 'paper trail' on programme adaptations and its organisational learning on the application of adaptive programming.

These recommendations above can be seen in conjunction with the MTR recommendations. Despite considerable action and progress to implement these, the evaluation considers that these recommendations overall remain valid in light of our proposed recommendations above.

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[94] The preparation of 'problem trees' and 'solution trees' can be used as a useful step in the formulation of the ToCs, as these allow to identify the needed changes at different intervention levels.

Knowledge and innovation agenda; strategic fundraising and positioning

1. NIMD is recommended as a first step to integrate knowledge and innovation into the overall learning process and not manage these as separate processes. The KSR and PME teams jointly should, with support from NIMD management, articulate one singular organisational learning process that integrates (1) what NIMD produces and disseminates in terms of knowledge with (2) what NIMD learns at the levels of The Hague and countries on how NIMD delivers its programmes, what results it achieves and what factors improve/hinder its delivery and impact on the ground.

2. The KSR team is recommended as a second step to ensure that the Knowledge and Innovation agenda is clearly connected to learning needs and objectives (to be articulated as part of the organisational learning process – see below under the internal learning section). This will ensure that knowledge production is to a large extent responsive to learning needs, which will improve its uptake by its users.

These recommendations above can be seen in conjunction with the MTR recommendations. Despite considerable action and progress to implement these, the evaluation considers that these recommendations overall remain valid in light of our proposed recommendations above. This particularly refers to the use of a 'Playbook' as also discussed as part of the recommendations under effectiveness.

Internal learning

1. NIMD is recommended to place internal learning as an organisation-wide priority for further organisational development. The KSR unit must lead the work towards formalising the learning process. For this, support from NIMD leadership and management is paramount for these efforts to be successful. As part of formalising the learning process, the evaluation recommends to specify the following components or steps in this process:

    a. Establish a clear mandate on organisational learning: NIMD leadership must assign roles and responsibilities within the organisation. In line with the latest organisational developments within the MAP 2021-2025, the evaluation recommends that the KSR unit spearheads the central coordination of these efforts. As the MAP 2012-2025 has integrated knowledge management responsibilities already into the profiles of the programme managers in The Hague, the KSR unit must ensure that the PME unit also has assigned clear roles and responsibilities. The evaluation recommends to this end that the KSR unit develops a ToR on organisational learning that outlines and defines the points identified above.

    b. Develop a learning agenda: the KSR unit should facilitate consultations with NIMD staff in The Hague and particularly at country-level to establish needs and priorities in terms of learning (including the potential development of knowledge products). The learning agenda should be demand-driven and needs-based and define clear learning objectives and priorities. The evaluation recommends NIMD to establish this as soon as possible so that this can accompany, for example, learning initiatives and efforts throughout the PoD programme, which has started in 2021. This will allow NIMD to make most of the learning opportunities and potential of the programme. The evaluation also recommends NIMD to use this as a 'living document.' In that sense, it can be annually revised and updated, to make sure it remains responsive to country needs and priorities.

    c. Define (annual) learning programme: the KSR unit should translate the objectives and priorities into learning programmes. The evaluation recommends to do this on an annual basis, so that specific capacities and resources match the prioritised learning activities, products and events for that year. NIMD management should ensure that the (annual)

learning programmes are allocated sufficient resources, ensuring that NIMD can deliver on the expectations raised by country offices/partner organisations.

d. Implement learning initiatives: the KSR unit should share the (annual) learning programme at the start of the year so that country offices/partner organisations can plan their participation accordingly. The evaluation recommends to involve the country offices/partner organisations in the organisation and facilitation of learning activities, products and events so that these are (co-)led to the extent possible. The evaluation considers that this will strengthen the feeling of ownership of country offices/partner organisations on learning.

e. Communication on learning outcomes: the KSR unit should, in coordination with NIMDs communication plan and related activities, actively follow-through on learning activities, products and events by communicating to internal and external stakeholders on the outcomes of the learning agenda and programme. The evaluation recommends to focus, for example, on the following take-away points: 'What are the key messages for our internal/external audiences based on our reflection?'; 'What does this mean for our programme/way of working?'; 'What can/should we do differently to improve performance?'; and 'Why is this relevant for our beneficiaries, development partners and external stakeholders to know?' This will also support strategic communication on evidence-based learning and support positioning efforts.

These recommendations above can be seen in conjunction with the MTR recommendations. Despite considerable action and progress to implement these, the evaluation considers that these recommendations overall remain valid in light of our proposed recommendations above.

2. In order to consolidate the strategic nature of the partnership with DSH, and explore how to expand this to the MFA more broadly, NIMD (central level) and DSH should agree on the establishment of a cycle of strategic meetings to discuss mutual needs and agree on a joint strategic agenda. These meetings should remain separate from technical meetings where programme progress is discussed, and could focus, *inter alia*, on upcoming opportunities for engagement at central level (e.g. conferences, seminars and discussion papers), but also at country level (e.g. planning of country visits, etc.).

3. In order to contribute to accountability of results and facilitate understanding of - and learning from - adaptive programming, NIMD (central) should include in annual programme reports for the MFA a section on relevant lessons learned, focusing on successes and failures and their implications for programme implementation. This can build on the existing 'bottleneck and challenges' and 'lessons learned' sections in country reports, and could either be presented as part of the report or as an Annex, depending on requirements agreed with the MFA.

4. In order to ensure more consistent buy-in from embassies throughout programme implementation and across all countries, NIMD (central and country) should systematically include them as key actors at programme design and inception phase. Learning from countries where the engagement has proven to be more successful is also recommended. NIMD (central and country) should consider taking stock of good practices in country office/local partner – embassy interaction, which can feed into the learning loop between country and central-level. A similar process as the one suggested for learning from implementation in FCAS can be applied for the mapping of good practices.

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