

# PROMOTING PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACIES





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Netherlands Institute for  
**Multiparty Democracy**



## OUR VISION

At the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), we strive to promote peaceful, just and inclusive politics worldwide through programmes and initiatives designed to strengthen democratic systems and bring people together across divides.

We passionately believe that inclusive democracy is the only system capable of serving the interests of all, and we help achieve this urgent goal by working with political actors to ensure they are genuinely responsive to the needs of their citizens.

Our story began in post-apartheid South Africa, when representatives from seven Dutch political parties advised their South African counterparts on strengthening democratic culture. Nelson Mandela urged the Dutch parties to expand their work to other countries, leading to the creation of NIMD in 2000. Accommodating different voices and embracing political diversity is therefore in our DNA, and today NIMD is committed to empowering people from across the political spectrum to achieve their ambitions in an inclusive, respectful and peaceful environment.

Working with everyone from aspiring politicians to established leaders, and from the national to the local level, NIMD has rich experience providing democracy education, dialogue support, inclusivity training, and many other initiatives to help build more equal and peaceful societies for all.



# OUR PRINCIPLES & APPROACH

Democracy can only thrive when all voices are heard, and all people are given equal opportunity to participate in politics at every level.

We build all our democracy support programmes around that core belief, ensuring we help empower everyone – from traditionally marginalized groups to established politicians – to play their role in political life and work for the common good of their country.

But this takes hard work, flexibility and long-term commitment. That is why NIMD adheres to its core principles in all the countries where we work. Crucially, we are committed to our principle of impartiality: we are non-partisan and independent, and we always work with politicians from across the political spectrum.

We also understand the value of tailor-made programming. Before we start working in any country, we collaborate with local experts to analyze the political playing field. Taking time to understand the context, and space for change, allows us to plan our unique contribution. In every country, we take a holistic approach, targeting different levels - from the political culture and system to the political actors themselves - to support an overall positive change.

We know that building resilient democracies takes time. It can be a journey with setbacks and challenges. By gaining an in-depth understanding and investing in long-lasting relationships, we are able to adjust our work to changing circumstances and respond in a flexible and timely way.

## OUR FIVE PRINCIPLES



### IMPARTIALITY

Our approach is non-partisan and independent.



### INCLUSIVENESS

We foster equal opportunities for under-represented groups.



### FLEXIBILITY

We adjust our programmes to changing circumstances.



### LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Our programmes are rooted in the countries we work in.



### LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

We invest in long-lasting relationships.

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## OUR NETWORK

NIMD thrives because of the passion, knowledge, and expertise of the people we work with, and we are proud of our extensive global network of country offices and partners, all working towards the vital goal of establishing responsive democratic systems.

Our network operates in a wide range of political contexts, including many fragile and sensitive political environments where democracy may be under threat.

These different, and often difficult, contexts make it crucial that we are led by expert practitioners working with an in-depth understanding of their environments. Our focus on national expertise ensures that our strategies reflect and respond to changing needs and demands in the countries where we work.

Drawing on the strength of this global network, we can also share knowledge between partners, foster cross-border collaborations, and inspire one another in our work towards a common goal.

### OUR GLOBAL REACH

Our network is growing and evolving, and we have decades of experience working with partners across Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the MENA region.

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### Juan Meléndez

Country Director NIMD El Salvador

"Being part of a global network allows us to share knowledge and experience when dealing with hurdles such as the closure of civic spaces. Only by working together can we build democracy in challenging environments."



### Susan Aref

CEO Women Empowerment Organization Iraq

"The greatest perk of the NIMD network is interacting with like-minded individuals with similar ideals, with whom we exchange ideas, share new insights, and make long-lasting professional relationships."



### Yinebeb Nigatu

Country Director NIMD Ethiopia

"When working in a difficult political context on ground, it is inspiring to hear the stories of others in the wider NIMD network who are going through similar experiences."



### Htet Oo Wai

Country Director NIMD Myanmar

"A challenge to democracy in one nation is a challenge to democracy everywhere. Being part of a global network helps shed light on diverse solutions to common problems and strengthens democratic values where they are needed the most."



## WHAT WE DO: DIALOGUE

At NIMD, we believe that democracy starts with dialogue. When different groups come together, a country has a greater chance of implementing reform, forging lasting peace, and cultivating a thriving inclusive democracy.

Through all our dialogue initiatives, we foster the trust, collaboration and consensus that form the foundation of a respectful democratic culture.

We do this at different levels and with different groups. For example, we bring together political parties in dialogue. When these parties work together, it forms a foundation of trust, where they can start to recognize common goals and resolve conflict with an equal voice. The political party dialogues also provide an opportunity for parties from across the political spectrum to draft new joint legislative bills and policies together.



Photo credit: Gorée Institute, Senegal.

**DIALOGUE FOSTERS  
TRUST, COLLABORATION  
AND CONSENSUS,  
AND BUILDS THE  
FOUNDATIONS FOR  
A RESPECTFUL  
DEMOCRATIC CULTURE.**

Our dialogue work also helps build trust and connections between politicians and the population. For example, our multi-stakeholder dialogues gather diverse groups in society that have a stake in the political process - civil society, protest groups or commercial interests, for instance - allowing different voices to be heard in reforms and policymaking.

Our dialogues take many forms, from established platforms, to informal convivial gatherings aiming to lay the groundwork for future collaboration. Each of these dialogue activities is responsive to the needs and goals of the people we work with, and to the political and cultural context.

### OUR SIGNATURE DIALOGUE INTERVENTIONS

While political party dialogue and multi-stakeholder dialogue are two examples of how our dialogue interventions work, there are many other forms in between, allowing us to respond to different political contexts and needs.

[Read more](#)



WHAT WE DO:

## DEMOCRACY EDUCATION

Every democracy needs transparent and accountable political actors. Developing the skills, knowledge, and networks of a country's existing and aspiring leaders ensures democratic traditions are cultivated and grow. Because, if a new generation of politicians embark on their careers with an understanding of the need to work together in the interests of their citizens, it lays the groundwork for dialogue and inclusive democracy to thrive in future.

NIMD offers a variety of democracy education initiatives to help support the ambitions of people across the political spectrum, from members of government and party leaders to young aspiring politicians, civil servants, democratic influencers and other civic actors.

**NIMD'S DEMOCRACY  
SCHOOLS LAY THE  
GROUNDWORK FOR  
INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY  
TO THRIVE IN FUTURE**

Our democracy education initiatives include:

- NIMD's renowned Democracy Schools, which offer a comprehensive package including studying political culture and democratic theory, and developing practical skills
- Tailored training programmes on issues such as gender inclusivity, peace and reconciliation, and electoral management
- Cross-border exchange programmes, allowing knowledge and experience to be shared across democracy education platforms
- Mentorship, coaching and psycho-social support

These initiatives go beyond the classroom. For example, by bringing participants together from across the political and ideological spectrum, our Democracy Schools ensure lasting networks and connections that bridge divides and help combat polarization in future. Many of our graduates are elected to office, helping bring systematic change to their political environment.

### DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS IN ACTION

At the heart of NIMD's democracy education programmes are our renowned Democracy Schools, which bring together established politicians and future leaders from across the political spectrum.

[Read more](#)



## WHAT WE DO:

# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS AND PEACE

The participation of women in political and peace processes is a key element in achieving a truly inclusive democracy, and women must have the chance to exercise their political rights and participate in all decision-making and reconciliation efforts.

At NIMD, we are committed to ensuring that women from across society have equal opportunity to access political structures and positions of influence. To achieve our goals, we work with political and civil society actors to foster an open political culture.

Gender inclusivity cuts across all our work, and we offer specific interventions to promote the participation of women:

- **Dialogue:** We establish gender-specific political party dialogues, where participants can exchange best practice on gender issues and legislative reform
- **Advising political parties:** NIMD works with parties to build and strengthen their internal structures and procedures to ensure the equal participation of women
- **Lobbying:** NIMD provides technical assistance on lobbying for legislative and policy changes to enshrine equal rights and equal participation in national law
- **Training:** We empower aspiring female politicians with mentoring, coaching, and training in political skills, media engagement, networking and campaigning
- **Research & Advocacy:** Understanding the barriers to participation is key in overcoming them, and we raise awareness through research and media campaigns



### WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY

Women are disproportionately affected by armed conflict but remain underrepresented in reconciliation processes. Despite this, women are critical at the negotiation table during peace talks. And, once the conflict is over and the journey towards peace begins, countries need capable women political leaders to contribute to building lasting peace.


Across our network, we support research, advocacy and dialogue that promotes the fundamental human right of women to participate in peace processes.

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## NIMD IN ACTION: MOZAMBIQUE



Advocating for change and betterment in a democracy requires time and investment at every level of a political system. Our partner in Mozambique – the Institute for Multiparty Democracy Mozambique (IMD) – understands the complexities of this process and has been working closely with political partners to increase the representation of women in politics across the country.



“Many of the activities and interventions that we do with women and girls are combined with lobbying and advocacy, because we cannot just bring people together – we must also give them the tools of empowerment,” says Lorena Mazive, IMD’s Programme Coordinator.

This multi-layered approach includes IMD’s Women’s Political Academy, which follows the principles of NIMD Democracy Schools and welcomes more than 100 women and girls each year from the country’s political parties and youth leagues. At the academies, attendees share knowledge and skills, expand their networks, and build confidence through workshops, mentoring and targeted training.

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**We cannot just bring people together – we must also give them the tools of empowerment.**  
”

Equipped with the tools to realize their political potential, the next step is ensuring that the barriers to equal participation are recognized and addressed. This is where IMD deploys its dialogue expertise. With positive links to all the main political parties and civil society in Mozambique, IMD gathers people from across the political spectrum to sit down at the same table and work towards common goals.

For example, representatives from the parties’ Women’s Leagues and Youth Leagues come together with civil society for regular multi-stakeholder dialogue sessions aimed at forging a common approach to increasing the representation of women and young people. The results of this dialogue are then presented at dialogue sessions IMD organizes for leaders

of the political parties, creating a safe space for lobbying for legislative change.

Through all of this, we are excited to have contributed to a tangible result. For example, a member of the Women’s Political Academy recently became the Secretary General of a party in Mozambique. It is the first time in the country’s history that a political party has a woman as Secretary General. “This shows that it is possible to influence change if you work closely with the political parties,” says Lorena

#### A BROAD PORTFOLIO IN MOZAMBIQUE

As well as advocating for women’s participation in Mozambique, NIMD supports work on ensuring transparency in extractive industries, promoting peaceful elections, and supporting reconciliation efforts.

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## WHAT WE DO:

# YOUTH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & INCLUSIVITY

An inclusive democracy means that all citizens should feel represented and heard. However, young people, minorities, and marginalized groups are often excluded from political structures, resulting in a lack of genuine representation in decision-making processes.

That is why inclusiveness and diversity are guiding principles across NIMD's work. Through our programmes, we contribute to the active participation of all groups in society and the equal distribution of power and influence, regardless of a person's age, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic background.

Photo credit: Women Empowerment Organization, Iraq.



We do this through:

- **Democracy Schools:** Targeting young people and people from traditionally marginalized groups as students in our Democracy Schools and other training initiatives
- **Advising political parties:** Working with political parties on their internal structure, to ensure equal rights and opportunities for youth, minorities, and marginalized groups
- **Lobby:** Providing support and advice to parliamentary committees and lobbying for legislative and policy changes ensuring equal rights and equal participation
- **Innovation:** Constantly innovating and finding technological solutions to reach demographic groups that have traditionally been marginalized from political processes
- **Research and campaigns:** Raising awareness and recognition for political participation through research, media campaigns and audio-visual products that harness the power of social media
- **Dialogue:** Integrating youth issues into the dialogue agenda, as well as directly involving young people in dialogue activities, where they can build their network and skills, or gain influence and engage with more established politicians.

### TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH

There are more than 3.5 billion people under the age of 30 living in the world today. Yet despite high levels of political and social engagement, young people remain one of the most underrepresented groups in parliaments.

Enhancing youth political participation is an important part of NIMD's work.

[Read more](#)

NIMD IN ACTION:

# GUATEMALA



At NIMD, we are committed to finding innovative ways to channel youth perspectives into policy. Investing in young people from all backgrounds is especially important in countries like Guatemala, where over one third of the diverse population is aged between 13 and 30.



NIMD helps boost the skills, knowledge and political participation of young people through projects like *Jóvenes+D* (Youth + Democracy), in which our democracy education initiatives are integrated with our dialogue platforms to enable young people from across Guatemalan society to influence both national and regional youth policies.

Between 2020 and 2023, more than 900 young people from all over the country worked with NIMD, our international and national partners, and local government to translate the needs, views, and perspectives of young people into policy documents that will help shape Guatemala's future.

Crucially, young people from groups often excluded from politics participated in *Jóvenes+D*, with women, indigenous youth, young people from the LGBTQI+ community, and young people living with disabilities all represented.

In the first stage of the process, NIMD Guatemala and our partners worked with a consortium of youth organizations to produce a document of recommendations for policies addressing inequality. A large proportion of these recommendations were taken up, forming the basis of the new National Youth Policy 2021-2032.

But a national policy is only the first step in a country with a diverse geographical and ethnic landscape, and *Jóvenes+D* took an integrated approach to equip young people at the municipal level with the skills and networks to develop policies which reflected their specific needs.

The project began with in-depth training on democratic values and competencies and other specialist subjects, with participants coming together online to build their knowledge and interact with people from different backgrounds and perspectives.

Equipped with new skills, the youth groups then had the chance to participate in dialogue sessions with municipal officials and local civil society. Through these dialogues, the participants jointly developed Municipal Youth

Policies which really reflected the voices and realities communicated by the participants.

NIMD's long-standing reputation as an impartial organization in Guatemala was key to fostering this fruitful collaboration with local government.

The project was a great success, with six co-created Municipal Youth Policies approved at the local level. The project also laid the foundations for future collaboration, with hundreds of young people trained in democratic values and connected across social, geographical and political divides. Thanks to *Jóvenes+D*, the new policies more effectively respond to the realities and challenges of being a young person in Guatemala today, while the creation of a network of self-confident young leaders is a positive step towards peace and stability.

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#### WORKING AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

NIMD has had a presence in Guatemala since 2002 and works at all levels across the political landscape to promote further development of a truly inclusive, multiparty democracy, with a strong focus on assisting under-represented groups in a diverse country with three different indigenous peoples.

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## WHAT WE DO:

# STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC INFRASTRUCTURE

At NIMD, we believe that political actors must put the needs of their citizens at the heart of their work. Fostering this responsive exchange underpins all our programming.

Political parties, politicians, parliaments, and locally elected bodies must be responsive to the needs of their citizens, because for democracy to thrive, institutions must understand the diverse needs of their people and pass effective legislation to support those needs.

Having supported more than 200 political parties around the world, NIMD has a diverse and flexible approach to assisting political parties, political actors, and other institutions to develop the appropriate skills to contribute to well-functioning democracy.

By providing training and advice, we support politicians and political institutions to identify and rally around common needs and issues; represent needs and interests in parliament's legislative process; build coalitions with civic actors; and develop and present concrete policy proposals.

We provide parties with specific support for policy analysis and offer training to help them develop clear and realistic policy positions. We also bring parties closer to voters by helping them draft manifestos, democratize their candidate selection process, and improve the representation of women and marginalized groups.

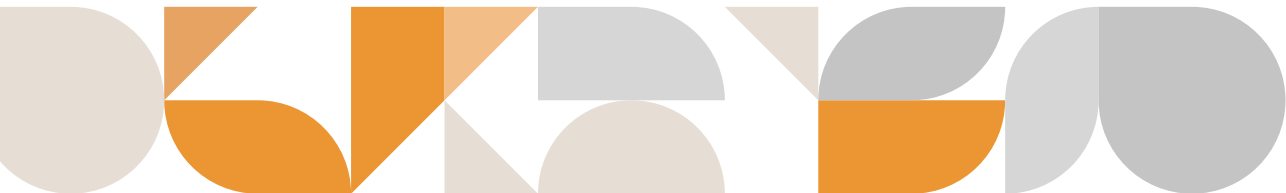


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### STRENGTHENING ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

At NIMD, we have extensive experience in supporting electoral processes, including through tailoring training programmes for election officials, party agents, and local observers. We also work directly with Electoral Management Bodies to ensure elections are open and transparent, and to build trust with broader society.

[Read more](#)





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Democracy starts with dialogue.