

# Analytical Report

POWER OF DIALOGUE PROGRAMME 2021 - 2025



THE POWER  
OF DIALOGUE  
CONSORTIUM

## Introducing the Power of Dialogue (PoD) Consortium

In 2021, the Gorée Institute (Senegal), Akina Mama wa Africa (Uganda), the Centre des Études Méditerranéennes Internationales (Tunisia) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy joined forces to form the Power of Dialogue Consortium. They formed a partnership of democratic actors from across the world, with strong representation from the Global South, built on local ownership and shared learning.

The Consortium worked to help women, youth and other marginalised groups participate in and influence political processes, combining support to civic and political actors, dialogue and trustbuilding, and protection of democratic space. It was active in **fifteen countries** across Africa, the Americas and Asia: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, Sudan, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq, Guatemala, Colombia and Myanmar.

## What changed over 5 years?

The Consortium operated in a period of significant global democratic decline. PoD countries experienced different forms of pressure to its implementation and impact: narrowing civic space, weakened institutions, changes in political opportunity and, in some contexts, conflict. Whilst these conditions impacted what the programme could achieve, the PoD Consortium successfully adapted to the changing contexts. The consortium supported democratic actors through capacity strengthening, trustbuilding across the political spectrum, setting-up and strengthening locally-owned dialogue mechanisms, and enabling the political participation of a large number of women and youth across the world.

### The Consortium's Main Contribution

The Consortium Partners facilitated spaces where **political and civic actors could meet, cooperate, and build trust**, including interparty dialogue platforms, alumni networks, and locally led coalitions. Their common value was enabling sustained participation of youth, women and other marginalized groups even when democratic space was closing.

Please read and watch the **Stories from across the Power of Dialogue Consortium** come to life [here](#).

## Programme outcomes snapshot

### A culture of dialogue and political trust

Political and civic actors created and/or strengthened spaces for dialogue, consensus-building and cooperation across political divides.

#### In action

In Uganda, the Inter-Party Women's Platform and Multi-Party Youth Forum brought together actors from different

### Women and youth as political actors

Women and youth acquired the necessary knowledge and skills that increased their confidence and encouraged greater leadership, leading to collective action and advocacy for reforms on political and democratic issues affecting them.

#### In action

### Policy change and institutional engagement

Political and civic actors contributed to policy proposals and inclusive legislative processes, and/or institutional strengthening and engagement.

#### In action

In Colombia, two Plans for Open and Transparent Congress were adopted. In

political backgrounds.

Aisha, alumni of AMWA's African Women's Leadership Institute, tells the story of the interparty forums in Uganda [here](#).

In the Sahel, young people created their own safe space in the Alliance of Young People for Peace and Stability in the Sahel.

collaboration and strengthening the Alliance for Open and Transparent congress.

# Highlights from the success stories

## Ethiopia

Despite Ethiopia's sensitive political context, political actors have **built trust across party lines**, working together to strengthen multiparty cooperation and coalition-building. This effort, involving 18 political actors, led to the establishment of the Ethiopia Visionary Leadership Association, marking a shift from individual capacity building to institutionalized inclusion. It also reflects the emergence of a new generation of leaders and a growing culture of dialogue within Ethiopia's evolving political system.

## Colombia

**Youth-led** deliberative (Youth Citizens' Assembly) and legislative **processes** (Territorial Citizens' Agendas) demonstrated democratic innovation and civic-political participation of women and youth in public policy-making and leading to several agreements such as the co-creation of the 7th and 9th Modernisation Plans for an Open and Transparent Congress. This showed the potential and the limits of influencing formal legislative outcomes.

## Kenya

Mzalendo Trust **strengthened citizen engagement in parliamentary and legislative processes** by expanding opportunities for women, youth and civil society to engage with elected representatives through the Civil Society Parliamentary Engagement Network, and through Mzalendo Trust's parliamentary transparency platform (with tools such as the [Promise Tracker](#) and [Parliamentary Scorecards](#)). Mzalendo Trust established itself as Kenya's primary parliamentary monitoring system for citizen oversight and engagement.

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women and youth across the world enhanced their political participation skills. In **Iraq** alone, 125 were trained.

## Myanmar

The team adapted its focus from the national to the **sub-national level** in Myanmar. Especially in Kayin and Karenni states, dialogue became a tool to address grievances and shaping inclusive solutions on the sub-national level.

## Tunisia

Against the backdrop of a very challenging context, CEMI played a key role in **preserving democratic dialogue** in Tunisia while building strong and lasting partnerships within the consortium and regionally. The Consortium Partners' complementary expertise fostered mutual support, knowledge exchange, and continuous learning, strengthening collaboration towards shared objectives, as shown through the joint publication of [The Voice of Youth at the Table](#).

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inclusive policy-making process involving women and youth.

## Jordan

The **modernisation and reform of the political system encouraged many young people and political parties** to get engaged in the process and created momentum for NIMD Jordan to support them. Not only did NIMD Jordan support the new generation of leaders to seize the moment, but also supported state institutions to be more willing and open to engage with women and youth and take on their recommendations.

# What have we learnt from PoD

## 1. Democratic change was strongest where individual support became collective action

The combination of capacity-strengthening and longer-term support to networks and platforms for collective action reinforced impact. This complementary approach allowed political and civic actors' ability to collaborate, organise and participate beyond individual gains. Capacity-strengthening was instrumental for many women and youth in their individual political journeys, but collective action carried this into lasting change. In **Mozambique**, women and youth collectively produced concrete collaborative commitments, such as joint inclusive electoral manifestos and a shared Women's Agenda, while in **Guatemala**, civil society and women organisations joined forces in the Alliance for Escazu Agreement to participate in legislative and policy consultation processes.

## 2. Political context shaped the impact

The programme operated across countries with diverse political contexts, several of which experienced democratic backsliding,

shrinking civic space or anti-democratic changes in national government during implementation. The Consortium's flexibility allowed the Partners to adapt their approach to these developments, but the developments still shaped the outcomes. In more restrictive contexts, such as in the **Sahel**, the Consortium Partners were able to hold the line by maintaining dialogue spaces with the Democracy School alumni.

### 3. Long-term commitment created opportunities for political influence

The opportunities for democratic change differed across countries and evolved over time. Rather than applying a uniform approach, Consortium Partners identified entry points that reflected local political realities and priorities. In **Uganda**, cross-party platforms helped maintain dialogue during periods of rising political tension. In **Colombia**, youth-led legislative initiatives and Parliamentary engagement strengthened collaboration between citizens and public institutions, in line with the peace agreement. The long-term commitment to local partnerships, political relationships and contextual knowledge allowed the programme's ability to respond strategically to shifting political contexts.

### 4. Flexible programme design supported local ownership

The programme's flexible design allowed Consortium Partners to adjust priorities and respond to shifting political contexts while maintaining its overall objectives. This reinforced PoD's emphasis on local ownership, enabling partners to shape interventions based on their political knowledge and emerging opportunities. In **Mali**, Democracy School alumni-led initiatives facilitated conversations with citizens around civic engagement and narratives around what democracy means to them.

### 5. Creating active spaces for sustainability

Alumni networks, dialogue platforms and locally led initiatives remained active or sought ways to continue after the Consortium ended, including alumni associations in **Ethiopia**, continued engagement through multi-party platforms in **Uganda**, and dialogue initiatives in **Mali** and **Kenya**. The long-term sustainability of several platforms however, remains linked to continued political will to support democracy initiatives. This experience nevertheless suggests continued demand for trusted spaces where political and civic actors can meet, collaborate and participate in democratic processes.

The **Baobab Network** brings together experienced dialogue facilitators, and shows continuous learning and capacity-building of the Consortium, enabling innovative dialogue approaches and adequate responses to changing contexts.

## Beyond PoD

Although the programme ended in 2025, its impact is sustained beyond its closing. The trust and relationships built between political and civic actors, the continued dialogue platforms, women and youth's strengthened capacity and confidence, and locally led coalitions and alumni networks will remain. This sustainability can be attributed to the ownership felt over these platforms and spaces. Demand for trusted spaces for dialogue and inclusive participation remains strong and continues to grow. Some mechanisms will continue to require political and financial support, but can be reactivated as political opportunities emerge.

## Strategic recommendations

- **Continue investing in existing and locally-owned dialogue platforms:** These platforms, in all their diversity, preserve channels for cooperation when formal democratic institutions are under pressure.
- **Support women and youth through collective platforms:** Democratic leadership outcomes improve when capacity development is linked to networks, advocacy and political access. In weak-institution contexts, network-building should be a primary programmatic objective, with sustained investment to keep it functioning.
- **Protect adaptive, locally-led programming:** Local partners are best placed to respond to political shifts and adjust strategies while keeping programme objectives intact.
- **Recognise and invest in "maintaining space" as a legitimate objective in closing contexts:** Light-touch engagement, relationship maintenance and continued political economy analysis enable rapid response when democratic openings appear.
- **Invest strategically in regional programming alongside national and local work:** Regional platforms provide a fall back when national space closes, enable learning transfer, and build solidarity networks that prove their value in crises.