



Omweri Angima is the Senior Programme Manager for the Centre for Multiparty Democracy in Kenya (CMD). Hailing from western Kenya, about 400 kilometres from Nairobi, Omweri has a rich political background. He advocated strongly for multiparty democracy in Kenya in the 1980s and 1990s, an issue he then dedicated much of his life to. Before taking on his role in CMD in 2003, Omweri was the first Executive Director of the Forum for Multiparty Democracy (FORD) and head of the Coalition for Peaceful Elections (COPE). During his time at CMD, he has deeply valued the tremendous sense of achievement, friendly working atmosphere and unconditional peer support.

With NIMD's support, CMD hosts interparty dialogue and implements activities geared at supporting political parties in Kenya and strengthening their interrelation with broader society. By bringing parties together to find a common position, it's possible to advocate and lobby for a joint solution to ensure policy is changed.

OUR WORK IN KENYA

▲ ELECTORAL COMMISSION CRISIS IN KENYA FINDING A SOLUTION THROUGH DIALOGUE

It's June 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya. The streets of the city centre are filled with people. At a first glance, you might think it was a funeral as four young men in front of the group are holding a coffin on their shoulders. But the letters on the side reveal that the deceased is, in fact, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). The crowd is protesting against this Commission's perceived bias. They are demanding that the nine commissioners step down.

The protesters walk through the central business district and, as they turn the corner onto City Hall Way to head towards Parliament, they are met by riot police. Suddenly, a canister of teargas is fired into the crowd and the group disperses, only to regroup a block down the road.

This scene is nothing new. Every Monday for months now on, the same lively protest has been staged and, every Monday, the protesters have been met with increasingly aggressive riot police.

▲ Tensions build

In Kenya's turbulent political landscape, partisan institutions and polarized political parties are the norm. Practically everyone and everything are aligned to a certain political party or movement. In the run-up to elections, polarization and tribalism increase and tensions between the groups soar.

There is one organization in Kenya, though, that is non-partisan by nature and has enough political clout to solve crises like these. The Centre for Multiparty Democracy in Kenya (CMD) is an organization run by the country's political parties themselves. The key to CMD's success is that all the major political parties from across the political spectrum are involved; this means that the organisation can act as a broker in moments of crisis. CMD was established by, and continues to be supported by, NIMD.

Back on the Kenyan streets, with the presidential and legislative elections drawing near, political tensions have been rising between the ruling Jubilee coalition and the opposition, united under the umbrella of the Cord coalition. Following the 2013 elections, which were deemed unfair by the opposition, and several corruption scandals relating to graft allegedly committed by the commission's big wigs, the Cord coalition started organizing weekly demonstrations to demand that the IEBC commissioners stand down. They had lost their trust that the Commission would create a level playing field for the 2017 elections. However, the commissioners are protected by the Constitution and there was no constitutionally legal way to remove them from office on the basis of the Cord accusations.

And so, the IEBC issue became a full-blown political crisis. It dominated the national news over the summer, with the two big political party alliances in Kenya face-to-face in a stalemate. With no solution in sight, people feared



increasingly violent clashes between protesters and riot police. This stalemate needed a broker, and needed one fast.

▲ Establishing dialogue

This is where Omweri Angima, Senior Programme Manager for CMD, comes in. Observing the increasing polarization in his country with concern, he also noted CMD's unique position as the only credible non-state actor perceived to be neutral enough to mediate the hardline positions taken by both sides.

In his capacity as Senior Programme Manager, Omweri felt he could use his close ties with the CMD party representatives to somehow broker the crisis he saw unfolding before his eyes. During a CMD board meeting, it was therefore decided that the organization should reach out to the party representatives to ask if the parties could

broker a solution to the impasse together with the CMD secretariat. Following initial contact by phone, and a formal invitation to all representatives, Omweri was elated with the positive response. The party representatives enthusiastically embraced the suggestion and conveyed the idea directly to the party leadership. Both coalitions were fed up with the stalemate and they wanted the situation to end as soon as possible.

In order for all the different parties involved to come to a solution that they could all agree to, Omweri knew that it was important for all of Kenyan society to be represented at the meeting. This meant making sure the IEBC commissioners, representatives from both coalitions, other political parties, faith-based organisations, trade unions, the private sector, and civil society organisations participated. As well as the importance of inclusivity, it was necessary to include top-level decision-makers in the meeting. Omweri reached out to the leaders, who were more than willing to join.

Representatives of the ruling party were eager to know more. They asked: "Who else is coming? If the leaders of the opposition are coming, we are willing to participate in this initiative by CMD. Have you thought about including religious leaders? Please make this meeting as inclusive as possible so that we can come to a solution that everybody can agree to!"

▲ An inclusive solution

The stakeholder meeting was an instant success and follow-up meetings were organized in a smaller group. Led by Omweri, the participants consulted with the main parties to draft a solution to the stalemate. Together, they concluded that "the IEBC issue needs to be solved through consultation rather than confrontation."

This stakeholder group decided to form a so-called 'Select Committee' that would meet outside of Parliament. It consisted of nine members of the National Assembly from Jubilee and nine from Cord. This select committee would be co-chaired by a representative from each coalition. The members would tackle the issue together to come up with a joint solution that both sides could agree to. As soon as this process was agreed, the weekly protests were cancelled by the Cord coalition and tranquillity was restored to the streets of the Nairobi.

When the Kenyan parliament adopted the Committee's solution, the way was paved for the resignation of the IEBC Commissioners. The new Commissioners took office and are now set to take up their task of preparing for the 2017 elections. Although there are still continuous issues surrounding the IEBC, the protesters went home and the crisis was averted.

Looking back on the events of the heated summer of 2016, Omweri is proud that he was able to facilitate political parties and civil society to put issues on the agenda of the select committee. His story illustrates how inclusive dialogue between parties, stakeholders and civil society can be used to create a well informed and broadly supported political solution. It shows how civil society and political parties can effectively lobby and advocate jointly to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for democratic elections. CMD and NIMD will continue their work under the Strategic Partnership programme to bring together political parties, act as a broker in moments of crisis and achieve a more inclusive form of politics where the ruling parties are receptive to solutions from the opposition and from civil society.





Eric Vignilé Tindo is a young man from Bohicon a town about 120 km inland from the Beninese economic capital of Cotonou. Born the eldest son of a family of five children, Eric's father has always worked as a welder while his mother stayed at home. In 2011 Eric gained a professional degree in computer science from the CERCO Institute and in 2012 he became the chairman of the youth movement in his hometown, 'Mouvement des Jeunes Pour la Relève de Demain'. The movement was originally created to support the re-election of the incumbent mayor of Bohicon, Luc Atrokpo, who is also the the National Executive Secretary of 'La Renaissance du Bénin' political party. The general and municipal elections however, planned for 2013 only took place in 2015, during the two years prior to the elections, Eric became very active for the party. Yet, according to himself, he did so while lacking all fundamental knowledge of democracy.

In early 2015 Eric joined the NIMD/AWEPA School for Politics.

"Eric has become one of our most dedicated students."
Says Jerome Scheltens, Programme Manager.

OUR WORK IN BENIN

THE BENIN SCHOOL OF POLITICS EMPOWERING DEMOCRATIC LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

Benin has seen some substantial economic growth over the past years but its effects on poverty reduction and development have been small. It is still one of the poorest countries in the world . Following the adoption of multiparty democracy in 1990, presidential transfer of power has taken place peacefully multiple times, respecting the maximum term limits and based on what are considered to be sufficiently free and fair elections. Though the country is considered to have a stable governance system , issues of severe corruption have led to increased social tensions resulting in strikes and demonstrations, democratic reform has also been stagnant for a long time as a very conservative political culture refers to uphold the status quo. As a result, politics in Benin is exclusive and belongs to a small political elite, policies and legislation rarely purposefully reflect the opinions of a broad section of the population, youth and women are especially excluded from participating in policy making and political leadership, because of this, there is very little trust or even interest in politics and governance.

In 2015 NIMD, together with AWEPA, initiated its first School of Politics in Benin, with the specific goal of promoting the role of youth and young women as democratic and civic orientated political leaders to help address their exclusion from politics. For the first cohort NIMD/AWEPA identified a group of 34 high-potential active political and civic youth, 11 women and 23 men from across the country, all hoping for a brighter future for their country. Firstly, training them over the course of the past 18 months in democratic values and culture during weekend retreats in Ouidah, a town just west of Cotonou, and then supporting their alumni network to organize activities aimed at influencing internal party policy and political decision making to be more open and accommodating to their needs.

During the first Schools session in early 2015, students were trained to improve their understanding of political systems and develop skills as political strategists, the students learnt to write party programmes and manifesto's, to develop strategic plans. They also learnt skills needed to maintain a political position such as public speaking.

Immediately after this first session Eric got to work putting his new skills into practice by writing a campaign plan and political programme for the Mayor of his home town. The mayor then put him in charge of communications and youth mobilisation for the municipality during the 2015 elections and so Eric was able to focus on organising youth activities such as post-election polls and door-to-door campaigns that promoted democratic values. Though at first, many party members failed to understand the importance of including youth in more positive roles in politics a change in behaviour by some of the youth leaders themselves along with a healthy dose of perseverance from Eric seems to have started to provide in roads in the old guard attitudes towards youth participation.

A subsequent Schools session later in 2015 focussed

on election processes and management, the students were trained in the importance of transparency and accountability during elections. Among other things, they developed skills in election observation, results management and developing an electoral Code of Conduct.

After impressing the Secretary General with his knowledge Eric was put in charge of selecting and preparing party poll representatives and representatives of the candidates at community and district level. He used the training skills he had learnt at the School together with the support of one of his classmates Veronique Tonoukouen to prepare the party representatives for election observation during the municipal and parliamentary elections. He used this opportunity to show the observers the content and importance of the electoral code and how to abide by it. He really struggled to get the idea across that election observation is about more than stopping another party from cheating but about legitimacy of the process.

On this topic Veronique noted that "Even if only one or two people are better equipped to observe the elections in a non-partisan way, we have made progress".

As part of the alumni network activities the programme supported Eric to organise feedback sessions to share what he had learnt within his youth movement, including what the youth wing should be doing better. Not all the youth leadership was willing to accept the changes Eric was pushing for, though he wanted the leadership to be more representative of the community some members felt they would lose their hold on power. However, according to Eric, over time the leadership of the movement has changed a bit, as they now see the political value of representing their community, they organise out-reach activities and have established a working group that gives the leadership space to discuss thematic topics and to learn from

each other.

"The youth leadership even pays its membership fees these days" Eric says proudly.

It's not perfect and the group still faces many challenges not least in its own capacity, but Eric points out how even little things can help when he notes his own ability to now debate instead of shout during discussions which has really improved the quality of his interaction, he says.

Eric speaks fondly of his classmates from a range of political parties and civil society backgrounds, and is the first to admit that the School has changed his view of women in politics after having seen how smart and dedicated the women are in his class.

Over the course of the past year and a half, Eric has become a great believer in democracy and even though he is the first to dedicate the career he now has within the party to the Schools programme, along the way he has managed to transfer so much of what he has learnt to his community and party. In the process, he has contributed to a more democratic political culture that is open to youth and women participation and a political system that supports transparent and legitimate elections. Not least, Eric has contributed to changing the way his party works from the inside, making it a more responsive and inclusive political organisation that he and other party members are proud of.

NIMD together with AWEPA continues to promote inclusive democracy in Benin among political and civic youth, it is currently working to improve the content of the School training sessions as well as the inclusion of representatives to cover the full local political scope, so that more people like Eric are empowered to become the democratic leaders of the future.





Presenting the School of Politics

First launched in 2014, the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) aims to strengthen the democratic role of politicians and political parties, and enhance the practice of multiparty dialogue.

As such, MySoP takes place in a multiparty setting: all parties with an established presence study and practice politics together in a neutral, respectful setting. In this way, the courses aim to build trust between the different political party representatives, and promote a political culture of openness and cooperation.

The School is made up of interrelated components:

- Core courses: intensive, 20-day learning retreats aimed at improving politicians' capacities and their constructive, policy-oriented political engagement.
- Alumni activities: long weekends where core course alumni gather to further increase their knowledge and capacity.
- Multiparty dialogue platforms: facilitated dialogue cycles designed to enhance multiparty dialogue and find new approaches to Myanmar's challenges and opportunities.

OUR WORK IN MYANMAR

THE MYANMAR SCHOOL OF POLITICS: BUILDING TRUST AND A CULTURE OF COOPERATION

Myanmar's transition to democracy

Apart from a brief window of multiparty democracy following independence from Great Britain in 1948, Burma, as it was called then, was ruled by decades of repressive governments. Trust between people, between people and the government, and amongst politicians had been eroded, and ethnic tensions spilled over into some of the world's longest-running armed conflicts. During the darkest periods, even the mention of the word "democracy" could land someone in prison. Many people who strived for citizen rule spent years of their lives behind bars or under house arrest. Just discussing politics was dangerous, let alone practicing it. In 2010, this slowly started to change when Myanmar held its first, imperfect, elections in over 20 years. The doors to democracy further opened in 2012 with by-elections that were considered relatively free and fair. By 2014, the number of political parties started to greatly increase as more and more people started to believe that the political change that was occurring was, in fact, real.



Christopher Michel/Flickr

▲ Setting up MySoP

It is within this context that NIMD, together with partner organization Demo Finland, started the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP) in 2014. MySoP works mostly in the ethnically diverse states in the north-eastern part of the country where, after decades of particularly intense conflict, the feelings of mistrust are most evasive. The lack of dialogue between political rivals was immediately tangible during discussions with political parties about the need for, and nature of, the Myanmar School of Politics.

Because political education and freedom of association had been effectively banned in Myanmar since 1988, equipping political leaders to make the most of the newly opened political space and possible future political responsibilities was a necessary step, both for the parties and for the country as a whole. These political leaders would hold the key to a successful transition to multiparty

democracy, so providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge would be crucial. Perhaps more importantly, from initial discussions it became apparent that they had a real drive to develop the skills and understanding needed to make the most of this new space.

The concept of multiparty political dialogue at the regional level was still largely uncharted territory; with so many new parties and politicians, it became important for all involved to have a good grasp of the issues at stake. MySoP would provide the political leaders with a four-week long, intense learning experience on political theory, democratic skills and multiparty dialogue. As a result, the fragile transition to democracy in Myanmar would be anchored in trust among the parties. This would prevent parties from fighting in the political arena and hopefully focus their efforts on much-needed development in the states and regions of Myanmar.

▲ Continuing the legacy of dialogue

In 2016, a group of politicians came together in a remote setting in Shan State to learn together, and build trust and a sense of community, a process which is at the heart of MySoP. NIMD has been working extensively in Shan State over the past few years. It is located in the northeast of Myanmar, and is the country's biggest and most ethnically diverse State. Almost four times the size of the Netherlands, Shan State is home to a large variety of terrains and ethnic groups, and plagued by ongoing conflict as well as a troubled history.

By mid-2015, Shan State had 16 registered political parties, mostly ethnic-based and with little political experience. Leading politicians from all these parties took part in one of MySoP's core courses. This was held in a small and secluded hotel, perfectly suited to serve as a safe space where political party representatives could feel comfortable to share their experiences and learn from one another. On the first day of the course, a diverse group of state-level politicians gathered in the room. Men, women, party executive members and youth representatives - all from different political parties, ethnic backgrounds and social classes from across the state - were ready to embark on a month-long journey of studying and practicing democratic politics together. Not long ago, a meeting like this would have been enough to get them dismissed from their parties, jailed, or worse. Now, they were here. While that in itself was progress, there was, during the first few days, tangible distrust, or at best scepticism amongst the participants, impeding cross-party contact let alone any type of cooperation.

▲ Building trust between the participants

It was clear that the participants needed time to feel at ease and NIMD carefully guided their introduction. The facilitators played an important role here by listening actively to uncover any feelings of discontent, both in terms of content as well as with regards to group dynamics, and putting in place mitigating measures if needed. From the very beginning of every course, NIMD takes into consideration all the factors which can contribute to creating a safe space. This can range from simple steps such as ensuring all participants have mosquito repellent and are satisfied with their rooms, to more crucial measures, such as jointly designing clear privacy arrangements that all participants feel comfortable with. For example, any photos or videos taken need to be approved by all participants before being released. To promote positive group dynamics, NIMD holds informal dinners and movie nights, brings sport equipment for the participants' spare time and holds at least one recreational activity such as sightseeing.

Slowly the participants of the Shan course started to gel. They felt more at ease with each other. As time went by, they became more open and responsive and started to have fun while learning and practising together. As one participant explains: "some of the MySoP participants live in my native town but I [would] never meet with them! We became friends in MySoP and it was very easy to communicate with them afterwards."

Participants from opposing parties could be seen playing Chinlone, a traditional non-competitive sport. This new openness enhanced trust building, and perspectives began to change towards cooperation across party lines.



▲ Participant testimonies: through their eyes

A participant from the ruling party shared their own experience: "When I worked with other parties in the group works, I saw their strengths. They knew some things that I didn't know about. We could share values from our thoughts and solutions in group exercises".

The General Secretary of one of the largest ethnic parties also opened up about the change: "In Shan State, parties did not have the chance to be friendly before. Now that we have better relations and better connections more cooperation is likely to happen."

A representative of an ethnic party indicated that, before the MySoP course, he had thought of politics as a game in which only one party can win. Now he has learned that cooperation is actually better than a zero-sum game: "It came as a big surprise to me."

With a new sense of trust and cooperation, the group was able to effectively build their knowledge of democratic concepts and institutions, also undertaking skills trainings to bolster their self-confidence and added value in the democratic transition.

To date, NIMD has trained 137 participants representing 30 political parties in five states in Myanmar, all of whom go back to their cities and towns in active pursuit of multiparty democracy. MySoP promotes a culture of inclusive multiparty democracy, based on trust and cooperation, where responsive and able politicians genuinely represent their constituencies. A lot has been accomplished since the transition to democracy, and NIMD is committed to continuing this work for the years to come.

After graduating from the core course the alumni will be allowed to enter the alumni programme that entails multiple day activities where core course alumni gather to further increase their knowledge and capacity on the issues of programmatic parties, intraparty democracy, and dialogue. The alumni programme allows the maintenance of the network that has shaped during the core course and facilitates the broadening of this network across region/state boundaries.



Interactive Radio and Television Debates in Mozambique



AWEPA entered into a Strategic Partnership with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NIMD, in order to strengthen the lobby and advocacy capacities of political actors in a number of African countries. Last year, AWEPA has kicked off a new project in Mozambique which raises awareness to peace and governance issues through interactive radio and television debates.

Working with selected community radio and television stations, AWEPA ran phone-in discussion programmes that provided an opportunity for citizens to engage in debates on thematic issues related to the political and economic concerns with MPs and members of provincial and municipal assemblies as well as civil society representations. Support for this programme included workshops for journalists at national and provincial levels.

In this project AWEPA partnered with the Youth Association for Community Development in Mozambique (Associação Juvenil para o Desenvolvimento Comunitário em Moçambique, AJUCOM) to train journalists and theatre actors on promoting amongst citizens active participation in political debates. The trainings took place in Manhiça and Magude districts, Maputo province. Journalists from two community radio stations were targeted, namely: Rádio comunitária de Xinavane and Rádio comunitária de Magude. In total 100 journalists were trained and 21 actors. The attendees of the debates included local leaders and community members among which students and representatives of the government institutions at local level.

As a follow-up to the trainings two community radio debates are now being broadcasted once a week, in which citizens are invited to interact with the politicians through the open and free phone lines.

Besides that, AWEPA provides equipment (radio tapes, microphones) which the community radios can use in their daily work.

The journalists have been organising radio debates on various topics of concern:

- Peace and reconciliation. Here participants urged the FRELIMO government and RENAMO to meet a consensus soonest. “Stop the war please! We want to go back to our farms and produce food. Our children are dying either by war or anger. You from parliament why are you not doing anything to help?” said a woman that attended one of the radio debates. Hon. Malunga, an MP, answered that parliament is working hard to help, but there are procedures to follow. He urged participants to be patient and vigilant.

- The economic crisis versus the hidden debts. Participants wanted to understand what happened during the past period which led for Mozambique to reach the current decrease of economic prosperity and high level of poverty.
- Functioning of Parliament. Many participants wanted to learn more about how the parliament works and why their representation role is rather weak? Communities wanted to learn more on how they can interact more with the elected people. They also mentioned that they lack the information about laws being approved by parliament. The MPs explained that the parliamentary sessions are actually open to the public. They also informed the participants that citizens can approach the parliament through the Committee of Petitions.



During these sessions, AWEPA together with the AJUCOM learned that local communities are very much aware of the priority developments in the country with regards to all areas of concern. They are eager to get engaged politically but most of the times they lack information and access to the institutions. The turn up of the attendance to the debates was constantly very high, meaning that the people are showing a great interested in democracy and governance processes.

Improving Inclusivity of Marginalised Groups in Uganda



Consultative field meeting between the committee on Equal Opportunities, Civil Society Leaders and Marginalized groups (PDWs, Deaf, Youth, Elderly & women) in Eastern Uganda from the 13th - 14th November 2016.

AWEPA under the Strategic Partnership Programme on Lobby and Advocacy with NIMD and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs began a Programme in 2016 aimed at contributing to good governance and democracy through a conducive environment for effective policy influencing.

In Uganda AWEPA's focus is centered around capacity strengthening/building and technical assistance for both staff, members and committees of the parliament of Uganda.

In 2016, AWEPA supported the committee on Equal Opportunities to undertake a field visit to the Eastern Uganda districts of Soroti, Tororo and Mbale to interface with marginalized groups, CSOs and local communities. This is part of AWEPA's objective of promoting gender equality and inclusivity that would ensure participation and representation of women and minority groups in political processes.

Cognizant of the fact that the involvement and inclusivity of marginalized groups is key in harnessing their uniqueness for national cohesion and development, the committee on Equal Opportunities, through this field exercise, sought to appraise the extent of inclusivity of persons with disability, women and the youth in the management of public affairs.

AWEPA works in close cooperation with the parliamentary committee on Equal Opportunities to appraise the awareness of marginalized groups of their rights, the accessibility to ongoing government interventions and to explore modalities for improving inclusivity of marginalized groups in the management of public affairs and responsibilities.

In this regard, AWEPA organized an outreach visit to Eastern Uganda and convened consultative meetings where marginalized groups ranging from women, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly explained their neglect from public affairs thus rendering their potentials redundant. They also informed the members of Parliament of the challenges they face and asked Parliament to work towards mainstreaming the issues of the marginalized groups in all societies in the country.

The consultative meetings helped to build confidence in these groups such that they can understand that they can also equally compete for public positions and take up representative roles at different levels in the country. *“Men continue to feel insecure as the discussion and process to attain real equity takes center stage both at national level and the other lower political structures”* says Hon. Hellen Asamo, Vice Chairperson of the committee on Equal Opportunities in Parliament.

The feedback and information obtained from these meetings has informed the committee on Equal Opportunities and committee of Gender both working on the People with Disabilities Bill 2015 to take care of their core concerns that affect women and other marginalized groups. The Bill has already been tabled on the floor of Parliament for discussion. To emphasize the ultimate goal to have this passed into law, Hon. Hellen Asamo called for her female counter parts to lobby amongst male Members of Parliament to support the Bill.

More proposals from the marginalized groups were handed over to the committee on Equal Opportunities for further discussion both at committee level and later be tabled on the floor of Parliament. The marginalized groups from the region came up with a set of proposals that they want Parliament to consider in order to improve their political participation. All these have helped to instill hope and confidence in women and other marginalized groups in the region.



The parliamentary committee on Equal Opportunities with the help of AWEPA is committed to continue lobbying and advocating for equalization of opportunities for women, youth and other marginalized groups in the country in order for them to be able to participate in political processes and other areas of public affairs. The committees' work will be boosted through tools like the Certificate of Gender Equity which is a requirement before any budget is passed by Parliament. It ensures that concerns of women are addressed during the budget

appropriation which in case short of should not be passed by Parliament.

The women in the region pledge to continue to advocate for gender mainstreaming and accepted to offer themselves for service at different levels in society leadership from district, regional and national level.