

Final Report 2017-2018

1% Fund project in Ethiopia

April 2019

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1. Introduction

This final narrative report on the NIMD 1 % flexible fund Ethiopia project provides a brief overview of the project and main results during the project period 2017-2018. It builds on and refers to previous reports as submitted on 11 November 2018 and in two memos on 12 November 2017 and 24 April 2018. Reference is also made to the NIMD Strategic Partnership (SP) annual reports 2017 and 2018 that NIMD submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the SP reporting cycle.

2. Programme results

Key result NIMD 1% Flexible Fund Project in Ethiopia

The 1% Flexible Fund Project allowed NIMD to proactively respond to the political changes in Ethiopia. A key result of the project is that it enabled NIMD to expand its programme in Ethiopia by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) in April 2018. With this agreement, NIMD now assists NEBE to build its capacity and in coordination with NEBE provides capacity-building support to political parties. In August, NIMD trained representatives of all political parties in dialogue and conflict resolution skills. Following this NIMD provided strategic support to the new inclusive dialogue on political reforms between all political parties. This dialogue was started by new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and is facilitated by the new Chair of NEBE, Mrs. Bertukan Mideksa.

In 2017, the efforts focused on building and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders in the government, House of Peoples Representatives (HPR), NEBE, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and opposition parties. This was done by organizing regular consultations with these stakeholders through a series of missions to Ethiopia, as well as through consultations on the sidelines of different capacity building activities organized under the SP programme in Ethiopia. These consultations ensured NIMD had a good understanding of political developments and of important aspects of the reform process. NIMD was able to build trust and relationships with key stakeholders, and assess what kind of support NIMD would be able to provide in this context in Ethiopia.

As part of this assessment, NIMD organized an international advisory group meeting in The Hague in October 2017 with international experts on Ethiopia. This meeting informed an updated political economy analysis of the NIMD programme in Ethiopia, and resulted in an updated programme strategy, planning of activities, and TOC for 2017-2018 as well as the annual plan for 2018. The meeting confirmed that NIMD was focusing on the right stakeholders, and that it was well positioned to try to support the dialogue process on political reforms.

Key Ethiopian counterparts such as the Secretary Generals and other leaders within EPRDF (and the parties that make up EPRDF, the ODP, ADP, TPLF and SNDPM), opposition leaders and representatives in HPR and NEBE expressed their interest in support from NIMD to the political reform process. This led to the formal request from HPR to NIMD to support an evaluation session of the dialogue between the EPRDF and opposition parties early December 2017. This evaluation helped parties to take a step back and reflect on the dialogue process, and some of its shortcomings (most notably the withdrawal

of key opposition parties MEDREK and Blue Party from the dialogue process). The evaluation took place while political tensions were already brewing within the ruling party EPRDF and which would trigger a series of changes early 2018.

Following a series of crisis meetings of the EPRDF leadership, Prime Minister Desalegn, suddenly resigned in February 2018. Following disagreement within the EPRDF on how to respond to the challenges in the country. In March, Abiy Ahmed became his successor, and showed the significant changes within the EPRDF with for the first time a representative from ODP (Oromia) leading the alliance and government.

After his inauguration in April 2018, the new PM moved rapidly to open up political space, by: reshuffling the cabinet; ending the state of emergency imposed in January 2018; releasing thousands of political prisoners; allowing banned and exiled political organizations and individuals to return; restoring relations with Eritrea and Egypt; unbanning bloggers and media; and announcing plans to partially privatize some state-owned enterprises. Importantly, he proclaimed multiparty democracy as the only route for the country's political future. Exiled opposition groups and armed movements have now returned to the country and an inclusive interparty dialogue has begun. The changes in government and the appointment of a new NEBE early 2018 were important developments that could enable NIMD to move forward and support further political reforms.

To build a relationship with the new NEBE (which actually was appointed just before the resignation of Desalegn in February, with for the first time a woman -Ambassador Samia Zekaria- as chairperson) NIMD decided to invite NEBE to visit the Netherlands on the occasion of the Dutch municipal elections (21 March). This allowed for an introduction to NIMD and a discussion about possibilities of NIMD support to NEBE and political parties, as well as to reflect on the tasks that NEBE has the coming years in Ethiopia. The visit laid the foundation for an MOU between NIMD and NEBE, which was agreed to in April and signed in May, to enable NIMD to work directly with NEBE and political parties under both the SP and 1% fund programme in Ethiopia.

Following further political consultations and assessment of political developments, NIMD was able to organize a first series of capacity building trainings on dialogue skills and conflict resolution skills for representatives of national and regional political parties. This laid the foundation for a better understanding of and wider support for dialogue among key representatives of political parties. Early September this was followed by a second evaluation session of the political dialogue. NIMD had support a similar evaluation session in December 2017. The changed political environment allowed for a further review of what would be needed to have a more genuine, transparent and -above all-inclusive dialogue on political reforms. A key conclusion was that the dialogue needed to include all parties, as well as the recently returned political groups.

NIMD organized a second International Advisory Meeting in October 2018, to reflect on the drastic political changes in Ethiopia and the programme strategy. A key conclusion was that, in light of changing political power balance, NIMD should aim to build relations and start programme activities in the different regional states to ensure an impartial foundation of its programme. Explorations started in 2018, and will be followed up in 2019 SP programming.

While the shape and timing of a next phase of dialogue was not yet certain, the Ethiopian government acknowledged the need to move forward with preparations for reforms. The Attorney General set up an Advisory Council and working groups to start research and prepare proposals for reforms. NIMD was positioned well through its network and key contacts as a trusted partner with the ability to provide support to this research and the drafting of proposals for legislative reforms of the electoral system, NEBE and political parties.

Towards the end of 2018, the PM took decisive steps to take the political reform process forward. He appointed the former opposition figure, Birtukan Mideksa, to head the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) as of November 2018. He subsequently called for a meeting with all national and regional political parties, as well as recently returned political groups to start an inclusive political dialogue on political reforms. He mandated Ms. Birtukan Mideksa, as chair of NEBE, to organize the dialogue.

NIMD, through its MOU with NEBE, was requested by the new chair to assist in organizing immediate follow up meetings with all parties and to provide her and the parties with strategic advice and support for the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue. In the final months of this 1% Flexible Fund project, two of such dialogue meetings were organized and helped to consolidate this important political momentum for dialogue and political reform.

Parties reach agreement on 32 point agenda and discuss reforms during Ethiopian Political Party Dialogue

In the first weeks of 2019, this initial phase of the new dialogue process culminated in the adoption of the rules of engagement of the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue and a 32 point agenda. The parties also held a first substantive dialogue between all political parties on key reform proposals, prepared by the Advisory Council of the Attorney General with support from NIMD. The dialogue meeting on 9 and 10 January, was attended by Hon. Ben Knapen, political advisor to the NIMD Ethiopia Programme.

<https://nimd.org/32-item-democratic-reform-agenda-agreed-between-ethiopian-parties/>

3. Implementation

The 1% Flexible Fund project has been closely interlinked with the SP programme of NIMD in Ethiopia. Under the 1% Fund, support was mainly targeted at providing support to electoral and political reforms in Ethiopia by supporting dialogue and build capacity of institutions and political actors in this domain. This specific focus of the 1% fund, and how it related to the SP programme, became clearer following the review of the programme TOC and logic in October 2017.

Because of delays in the startup of the dialogue process in 2017 due to different political developments, and the experienced delays in the finalization of the signing of the MOU with NEBE (for support to NEBE and political parties) the intervention strategy, and implementation of activities was affected, which led to an under expenditure in 2017.

The bankruptcy of AWEPA in 2017 further affected the Strategic Partnership of NIMD with AWEPA in general and both the SP and 1% fund projects in Ethiopia. However, through proactive consultations with Ethiopian stakeholders NIMD was able to mitigate this and ensured commitment to continue the programme. The Ethiopian counterparts expressed their continued willingness and interest in support from NIMD.

Annual international advisory meetings, which brought together the NIMD Ethiopia programme team, NIMD advisors and international experts on Ethiopia, were used to analyze political developments and review the programme strategy. In 2017 that led to an updated TOC of the SP and 1% Flexible Fund project and a realignment of the results framework and budget. Results and activities for the 1% fund were aligned under the system level objective that aims to contribute to an inclusive participation and representation in the political system of Ethiopia. These annual review sessions, supported the regular analysis undertaken by the team based on political consultations and mission, and to validate and underpin choices to make adaptations to the programme interventions.

4. Budget Notes

Under result area 1.1.:

Intervention 1.1.1.: The under-expenditure was caused by the delay of the planned exchange to Mozambique. This exchange visit was initially scheduled in December 2018 in close coordination with the Ethiopian political parties. It had to be delayed to early 2019 due to political developments and most notably the start of the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue and subsequent meetings in December 2018.

Interventions 1.1.2. and 1.1.3.: The dialogue and conflict resolution skills trainings were organized in August 2018. The under expenditure for dialogue skills trainings, relates to follow up trainings that were postponed to 2019 in coordination with NEBE, because the dialogue process first needed to be restructured towards the end of 2018.

Under result area 1.2.:

Intervention 1.2.1.: The over expenditure under this intervention was caused by the opportunities that presented itself towards the end of the project in November and December 2018 to support several dialogue meetings between the political parties following the launch of the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue.

Intervention 1.2.2.: In parallel to the review and start of the new dialogue, the AG started a process to develop proposals for reforms in the 3rd and 4th quarter of 2018. NIMD was well positioned to provide strategic support to this process, in particular related to the research on the electoral system, NEBE, and political party legislation. This led to an over-expenditure on this budget line. The results of this research were presented to and discussed by the political parties during a NIMD supported dialogue meeting in January 2019 (just outside of the scope of this project).

Intervention 1.2.3.: NIMD invited the newly appointed (February 2018) NEBE board to visit the Netherlands to observe the Dutch local government elections. This visit was initially not foreseen in the annual plan, but served the purpose of a study visit, relationship building with NIMD, and building

the foundation for a MOU between NIMD and NEBE that would enable NIMD to provide support to political parties and the political dialogue.

Under result 1.3.:

There was an under-expenditure (no expenditure) under this result area, as the reforms supported through the dialogue process, had not yet reached the legislative process by the end of the project.

NIMD expert consultation and PME:

The budget under expert consultation and PME was used to organize the annual international advisory meetings and support the review of the programme strategy and TOC in 2017 and 2018.

5. Beyond the project

The 1% Flexible Fund project has enabled NIMD to position itself in Ethiopia, on top of the start of the SP programme, to support political reform process. It has helped to build the foundation for key political relations and trust, and ensured NIMD could respond in a flexible and adaptive manner to the rapidly changing political environment in Ethiopia, and the opportunities that presented themselves.

NIMD will continue on this road. Already in 2018, NIMD started to engage representatives of the international community to assess how broader support for the NIMD programme could be realized. The Dutch Embassy played an important role, in advocating for the role that the NIMD was playing and could play to support the political reform process and elections (scheduled for 2020).

Combined these efforts have led to an invitation from the EU delegation to develop a proposal for the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) as part of its democracy support package for the next elections. NIMD is currently in the final stages of negotiations with the EU for this project. It will focus on providing support to the Ethiopian Political Parties Dialogue (EPPD), which will be complemented by capacity building support to Ethiopian Political Parties, by setting up an Ethiopian School of Politics (ESP). The project is expected to start in July or August 2019.

To ensure that the current momentum is capitalized upon, and the dialogue process in Ethiopia is supported effectively, NIMD has ensured the SP Ethiopia programme provides the necessary support in the first half of 2019.

Annex A: Result Framework and Financial Report

Annex B: Human Interest Story 2018