Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

Annual Report 2020

Strategic Partnership Dialogue & Dissent (SPDD) Programme

Conducive Environment for Effective Policy Influencing: The Role of Political Parties and Parliaments

June 2021

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1. Introduction

This document presents the Annual Report 2020 for the programme entitled "Conducive environment for effective policy influencing: The role of political parties and parliaments", implemented under the 2016-2020 Strategic Partnership Dialogue & Dissent (SPDD) with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). It focuses on strengthening the lobby and advocacy roles and capacities of political actors, and creating an enabling environment for inclusive development, so that lobby and advocacy efforts by civil society fall on fertile ground. This programme was implemented in a total of 16 countries over the five-year period.[1]

The final year of the programme was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought programme implementation to a near-complete stop during the second quarter. At the request of the MFA, NIMD embarked on a programme-wide analysis of the direct effects of the crisis on the political contexts in which we work and on the interests, incentives and power relations of the actors we work with.

As part of NIMD's internal Mid-Year Review 2020, we therefore asked all the country teams (NIMD country offices and local partners) taking part in the SPDD programme to conduct a COVID-19 crisis analysis. The objective was to: (i) understand the impact of the crisis on the political contexts in all programme countries; and (ii) review the impact on the current pathways of change for the programme and assess what results we could still realistically achieve in 2020. The analysis resulted, to a large extent, in the confirmation that the results could still be met, provided some minor adjustments be made to the Annual Plan for the remainder of the programme. These adjustments were approved by the MFA in October 2020.

2020 also marked the final year for some country programmes that will not be part of the next multi-annual programming supported by the MFA. This is the case for Zimbabwe and Indonesia, where the Zimbabwe Institute and Kemitraan will be able to continue their relevant work in the coming period with other partners than NIMD, while still remaining part of our network. This is also applicable for Benin, where NIMD has supported the transition of its country office into an independent organization, the Institute for Governance and Democracy (IGD), and we provided assistance in securing new funding.

This report presents some of the results achieved in 2020 through a selection of programme country highlights around the main thematic area of the programme (Section 2). It also provides an overview of the interventions implemented under the programme's cross-cutting themes (Section 3), namely on International Lobby & Advocacy, the Learning Agenda, and Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation.

As 2020 is the final year of the SPDD programme, this report also summarizes the findings of the Final Evaluation of the programme, conducted by MDF Training and Consultancy in the second half of 2020. It further analyzes the contribution of the programme to the overall objectives identified in the Theory of Change (ToC) during the five-year period, and reflects on the main challenges and lessons learned (Section 4).

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[1] Benin, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras (regional programme) for the entire programme duration. Ghana and Georgia were included until 2018, while pilot programmes in Niger and Burkina Faso were included in 2019.

Finally, this report provides a brief financial overview (Section 5), with the detailed Financial Report presented as Annex A. The final measurements of intermediate outcome indicators and SPDD indicators are also presented in Annexes B, C and D. Human Interest Stories on Ethiopia, Honduras and El Salvador are presented as Annex E.

2. Programme update

This section presents a selection of key highlights and results achieved in the programme countries over the past year. These relate to the overall programme objectives and relevant thematic focus identified in the programme ToC.

Bridging the gap between political actors and citizens

Following the establishment of a transitional government in **Mali**, NIMD and its partners took the opportunity to launch the *#MaTransition* Campaign. This campaign, labelled as "the hashtag that empowers young people", sought to open up questions on all matters related to governance. Engaging with such a broad cross-section of Malian society, from regular people in the streets all the way up to MPs' offices, provided many practical insights. NIMD was able to collect opinion data on all manner of policy areas, from how parties in the transition should conduct themselves to the role of the education system and perceptions of women's leadership. This information was used to shape the new programming under the Power of Voices framework.

In **Benin**, NIMD launched a digital platform to bridge the gap between political parties and citizens. The [Political Party Portal](#) aims to provide the parties with a space to communicate their programmes and key policies to the general population. Through the platform, the people of Benin can easily browse relevant content on what each party stands for. They can compare policies on different sectors such as education, health, security and the environment. The platform also brings citizens, political parties and elected politicians closer by making official texts on the party system and Beninese elections readily available to the public.

In addition, NIMD continued to conduct awareness campaigns on the role of money in politics in 2020. This was the case in **Niger**, in partnership with the local NGO, *SoS Civisme Niger*, based on the findings of the 'Cost of Politics' research. This campaign targeted political parties, civil society organizations, the media, young people and women. While more than 30,000 citizens responded to this campaign, political actors were also specifically targeted; they were asked to contribute to a reflective discussion on the best way to do politics with less recourse to money. Political Party representatives from across the political spectrum jointly drew up an action plan, which will serve as a basis for NIMD's future work in the country.

Trust-building and inclusive dialogue

NIMD's partner IMD **Mozambique** supported the two Commissions of the National Parliament specialized in legal reforms (namely, the Constitutional Affairs, Human Rights and Legality Commission and the Public Administration and Local Government Commission) in conducting a public consultation

process in all the provincial capitals of the country. The consultation consisted of collecting contributions from civil society, political parties, Electoral Management Bodies, religious actors, police, courts, the attorney general's office and representatives from the provincial assemblies. This consultation process contributed to making the electoral reform agenda more inclusive, by involving the various actors in the process.

NIMD **Guatemala** provided technical assistance to Supreme Electoral Court's Electoral Update and Modernization Commission (CAME) in organizing roundtables with civil society organizations, political parties and other key actors, to discuss their proposals to strengthen and reform the electoral legal framework. As a result, a Strategic Proposal Matrix was developed around the six main themes for electoral reform, including the electoral system, political party financing and strengthening electoral institutions.

Textbox 1: The #IChoosePeace campaign for peaceful elections in Uganda

In the run-up to the January 2021 general elections, in a context of rising tensions between parties and reports of political violence, NIMD launched the #IChoosePeace campaign, which called for peaceful conduct throughout the electoral process. #IChoosePeace targeted all individuals, groups and organizations involved in the 2021 General election, urging them to conduct themselves peacefully and set a precedent that shunned future electoral violence. Reaching this goal would require direct action by actors at every level of Ugandan political life, including government, security forces, political parties, candidates and the electorate itself.

The launch event took place in December in Kampala. Despite strict social distancing and other measures, it was able to bring together actors from across Uganda to make a collective pledge to promote peaceful political conduct. IPOD, a dialogue platform facilitated by NIMD that brings together all parties represented in Uganda's Parliament, had previously helped parties discuss and resolve issues around security and elections, and was well represented at the #IChoosePeace launch.

Capacity strengthening of CSOs for Lobby & Advocacy

In **Kenya**, NIMD's partner Mzalendo released its Parliamentary Score Card for the 12th Kenyan Parliament. This Score Card aims to track MPs' performance over the course of the year, and received extensive coverage in the media. For the first time, the score card also analyzed the performance of the House in terms of the legislation passed, as well disaggregating the data into gender and age demographics. In addition, Mzalendo also developed two parliamentary monitoring tools to track the impact of COVID-19 on governance and to enhance tracking of the legislative response. These tools also informed a media round table, convened by Kenya Television Network, at the end of the year.

Gender equality & inclusion

In **Honduras**, NIMD organized a week-long training for women candidates in the 2021 General Elections. A total of 60 members of nine different political parties developed their knowledge and skills on the fundamental communication and planning tools, necessary for their political activity and electoral campaigns. The training also focused on developing participatory processes as a way to bridge the gap between citizens and elected representatives, and improve the representation and visibility of women in politics.

As well as capacity building for women candidates, NIMD also supported Lobby & Advocacy initiatives to strengthen women's political participation in programme countries. This was the case in **Zimbabwe**, where NIMD's partner, Zimbabwe Institute, organized a workshop for the Women's Caucus of the National Parliament. This workshop aimed to inform the strategy around the issue of women's political representation. In particular, the Caucus addressed the key goal of achieving a 50% gender split among representatives in Parliament and local Government structures and formulated related recommendations. These included the need to lobby for legislation to ensure all political parties who seek to contend in an election have equal representation of women and men; and the need to identify male champions in Parliament to assist with a motion of equal representation..

Textbox 2: Assessing the impact of COVID-19 in programme countries

Throughout the year, NIMD partners and country offices have adjusted their implementation modalities to the COVID-19 restrictions, for instance by organizing trainings and dialogue sessions online. Next to these practical adjustments, NIMD also played a role in assessing the impact of the crisis in the contexts in which we operate.

In Ethiopia, NIMD and the Oromia Regional State legislature, Caffee Oromiya, commissioned a study paper on the impact of COVID 19 in the Oromia region. The study revealed that COVID-induced economic stress is fueling the existing discontent within the population. The research was presented in a seminar attended by the leadership of the Regional Parliament and other high-ranking regional government officials. The recommendation on the urgent need to support low-income groups affected by the pandemic was adopted by the Parliament. The benefits include provision of subsidized basic supplies at government-run shops and tax cuts for small-scale businesses.

Assessing the impact of COVID-19 was also key to our work in Honduras, where NIMD organized a series of virtual meetings between alumni of the Democracy School, national politicians and experts. The meetings served as a forum to discuss the economic impact of the crisis, analyze its political dimensions, and highlight the importance of dialogue in times of crisis.

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3. Cross-cutting themes

Within the SPDD Programme, there are a number of cross-cutting components, such as the International Lobby and Advocacy strategy, the Learning Agenda, and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. These will be addressed in this section.

3.1 International Lobby & Advocacy

ILA at the European level

Effective policy influencing goes beyond the national programmes, as the call to support parties and parliaments needs continuous reiteration, also at the international community level. The European Union (EU) and its institutes are an increasingly important global actor in promoting the objectives of the SPDD. Therefore, NIMD's ILA programming over the past five years aimed to influence how the EU can play a supportive role in this regard. The main vehicle for this remains the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), the umbrella organization of democracy support organizations co-founded by NIMD, which plays a key role in advocating towards the EU institutions. After the successful adoption of the new EU Council Conclusions in support of democracy in late 2019, the next step was the new EU Action Plan for Democracy and Human Rights – the main policy document guiding EU programming in the coming years. The SPDD programme supported a high-level event in February, linking the results of our Closing Democratic Space project to the draft Action Plan. The final Action Plan pays clear attention to the approach and priorities of how NIMD and its partners operate under the SPDD. This relates to the need to strengthen political parties through dialogue, and including the focus on increasing the role of women within parties (see pp 20-21).

During the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of our EU advocacy turned to countering the trend of authoritarianism and the frequently observed (ab)use of emergency powers, related to COVID-19 measures, to restrain opposition or dissenting voices. This 'pandemic backsliding' of democracy was addressed in consultation meetings and the OECD/DAC GovNet meeting, through the updating and expanding of our country cases on closing democratic space and based on our own analysis from country programmes (see part on closing democratic space in section 3.2).

ILA at the United Nations level

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GPMD member network for joint lobby and advocacy towards the UN had to postpone its plans and board meeting. As the majority of relevant events at the UN level were postponed or held online without concrete opportunity to contribute, this part of the ILA programme was halted in 2020. Within the new partnerships with the MFA, there is a renewed and dedicated approach to influencing the international level, including specifically the UN with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals. The work that started under the SPDD will therefore find continuance with strong input from NIMD country offices and partners on, for instance, national progress reviews around SDG16. This will take place in the context of working towards the next High Level Political Forum in 2023, where SDG16 is up for review.

ILA at the ECOWAS level

As a build-up to the new Power of Dialogue programme (2021-2025), NIMD started a collaboration with the Gorée Institute, through a pilot project in 2020. This project aimed to jointly lobby the ECOWAS Secretariat, to promote the effective participation of citizens in decision-making, and a better alignment between societal values and the political system within its Member States.

Specifically, the Gorée Institute collaborated with NIMD's country offices in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin to conduct research that has resulted in the following four publications:

1- [Political perspectives in the Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Senegal](#)
2- [Citizens' perceptions of governance in Benin](#)
3- [Societal values and political systems in Burkina Faso](#)
4- [Monitoring institutional stability in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger](#)

The Gorée Institute organized a regional meeting in December 2020, as a way to share the findings of this research with national and regional civil society, national and regional institutions, the ECOWAS Secretariat and other relevant partners. In addition to promoting respect for the principles of good democratic governance as a solution to peacebuilding, the regional meeting also provided an appropriate space to reflect critically on the current political situation in key countries of the region (i.e. Sahel, but also Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea). These countries have all experienced backsliding of democratic stability, in violation of the principles of the ECOWAS Protocols on 'Democracy and Good Governance' and on the 'Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security'. The meeting allowed stakeholders to share their views on the findings of the studies and to formulate a series of joint recommendations to ECOWAS, its Member States and local CSOs.

Some of the key recommendations to ECOWAS included the need to revise the Protocol on 'Good Governance' to introduce stringent provisions on term limits and to fight against the practice of wrongfully using the law to exclude candidates from elections. Several recommendations also emphasized the need to strengthen the role of civil society in general, and youth organizations in particular. These will serve as a basis to develop an L&A strategy towards ECOWAS in the coming five years.

3.2 The Learning Agenda

Closing Democratic Space

Understanding closing democratic space has proved highly relevant to our work over the last five years. The country studies drafted between 2017 and 2019, and the overall analysis that emerged out of these, were used to illustrate the need to define the phenomenon of shrinking civic space in broader terms and include political actors in this discussion. Many donors and strategic partners welcomed the [final report](#) as an illustration of the closing of space for open politics and inclusive decision-making. The following tactics for closing space were identified in the report:

- Restricting civic space, particularly freedom of expression, assembly and association. This stops media outlets, emerging political (opposition) forces, and civil society organizations from carrying out their work.

- Changing the rules of the game, which creates an uneven playing field for political contestation. This includes the abuse of state resources, skewed reforms in political party and electoral legislation, and one-sided private and illicit financing in campaigning.
- Undermining the separation of powers, notably the independence of the judiciary, and allowing impunity and violence to shape the activities of citizens, media actors and civil society.

These tactics have the same objective: Gradually silencing dissent and concentrating power in the hands of the few. In many countries, they are being used to slowly erode democratic space, sometimes through subtle attacks and protection of the status quo.

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in 2020, these studies were expanded, and the existing ones revisited, to take on board the impact of restrictive COVID-19 measures that many governments decreed. This report can be found here. Our findings highlighted the exacerbating effect of the pandemic on the concept of closing democratic space.

Recently, the findings and recommendations of the report were presented and discussed in a workshop with speakers from the European Commission and academia. The country-specific reports were also shared with counterparts in embassies and strategic partners on several occasions. All these efforts have clearly put the concept of closing *democratic* space on the agenda, finding its way, for instance, into the EU Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights, which references both shrinking civic space and shrinking political space as issues to address when supporting democracy.

Party-Parliament Nexus

As part of the party-parliament nexus project, the Cost of Politics initiative continued during 2020 with the finalization of country studies and data collection. Through this project, NIMD researched the costs related to political participation in Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mali, Niger and Uganda, and the effect of such costs on access to politics, including by women and other marginalised groups. By joining forces with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), we have enabled to project to cover more countries, and a joint website is on the verge of being launched. This comparative online platform, which represents the culmination of the project, hosts all country reports and invites other partners to share relevant data and research on the topic.

Learning and cross-fertilization between country programmes

The level of interaction and exchange between the NIMD programmes was highly affected by the pandemic and its restrictions on travel and physical meetings. Nevertheless, the NIMD network has adapted to this new reality and focused on strengthening knowledge sharing between the different staff and partners. The development of the new programmes under the Power of Voices also provided a new framework to further build on several knowledge themes that continue to be of essence for our work (now and in the future). These include working with dialogue as an approach, or sharing lessons using an innovative app (*MonElu*) to bridge the gap between politicians and citizens. The newly relaunched NIMD Knowledge Hub played a key role in sharing and making knowledge available, as did other online tools (Zoom, Miro, Jitsi, Menti).

3.3 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

In 2020, NIMD's PME team focused on two main tasks: 1) further operationalizing the recommendations from the programme's Mid-Term Review and 2) collecting evidence, sense-making and learning about programme achievements. In addition to this, NIMD conducted its regular indicator-based results monitoring, collected human interest stories and provided capacity support to NIMD's in-country partners. The specific objectives formulated for 2020 were:

(1) Continued support and capacity building of NIMD's partners and country offices for innovative approaches to result measurement, data collection methods, data analysis and reporting. This included support to further institutionalizing: a) intermediate- and outcome-level indicator measurement, b) Outcome Harvesting for monitoring and evaluating in NIMD's programmes, and c) actor-based pathways of change for programme (strategic) planning.

(2) Final evaluation of the SPDD programme

The Terms of Reference for this evaluation were drawn up in December 2019, together with DSH, as per the grant requirements and IOB guidelines. A restricted-tender procedure was conducted, and resulted in an evaluation team being contracted in the second quarter of 2020.

The end-of-programme evaluation by MDF was conducted over several months in the second half of 2020, and a final report was delivered before 1 December 2020. Due to COVID-19 travel and meeting constraints, much of the data collection was online. Country case study data collection was, however, successfully completed through the use of in-country consultants. A final session was held by NIMD and MDF to present the conclusions and recommendations, with DS and DSH in attendance. This yielded a nice closure moment.

The evaluation concluded "**that the SPDD has provided a unique and relevant contribution to the Dialogue & Dissent framework**. The SPDD is the only programme that has directly worked with political parties and parliaments, which are critical and essential actors in furthering inclusive democratisation processes. The desk review and outcome cases reveal that the **SPDD has made small but significant contributions towards more pluriform democratic processes."**

(3) End-of-programme outcome indicator measurement

The end-of-programme outcome indicator measurement was carried out in the second half of 2020. All programme country teams conducted an end-term outcome indicator measurement. NIMD's PME team assessed the programme's progress on the outcome level by comparing baseline, mid-term and end-term measurements (see Annex D).

(4) Outcome harvest of Kenya CMD-K and Mzalendo

Throughout the SPDD programme, we continued to develop the Outcome Harvesting (OH) approach for the internal evaluation of specific country programmes. The NIMD PME team in The Hague conducted two Outcome Harvesting workshops for two partners in Kenya - the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD) Kenya and Mzalendo - to learn about programme effectiveness, and help determine the focus of the Kenya country programme beyond 2020.

4. Overall programme review

4.1 Final evaluation

This evaluation took place in the final year of the SPDD programme, with the primary aim of drawing lessons from the programme's performance in order to benefit future programmes that NIMD and its partners undertake. In addition, the evaluation served an accountability purpose by providing an independent assessment of the extent to which the programme was effective in realizing its intended outcomes, as well as the extent to which resources entrusted to the programme were used efficiently.

In addition, the evaluation responded to questions relating to the validity of the programme's ToC; the sustainability of results; the effectiveness of internal learning; the effects of programmatic shock (i.e. the closure of AWEPA and the COVID-19 pandemic); and the quality of partnerships.

As mentioned above, the evaluation concluded that the SPDD provided a unique and relevant contribution to the Dialogue & Dissent framework. The evidence showed that the SPDD made small but significant contributions towards more pluriform democratic processes. This was most notable in the creation and broadening of dialogue mechanisms, while progress towards women's participation proved the most challenging.

The programme also showed resilience in adapting to changing circumstances, which benefitted its effectiveness in reaching and influencing political actors, going beyond political parties when necessary. Nevertheless, the complexity of pursuing changes in political systems and behaviour across multiple countries demands modesty in the speed and scale of change and makes it impossible to answer the question of whether the SPDD made 'enough' progress. In addition, the sustainability of

the SPDD results remains vulnerable and subject to the (changing) will of political actors, which requires a long-term, consistent and repetitive exposure to democratic norms and values, whereby the Democracy Schools demonstrated to be a relevant and valuable SPDD intervention.

The efficiency of programme management was reasonable and stable, with a good balance in maintaining financial accountability and respecting the autonomy of partners. Finally, the programme increasingly invested in learning, resulting in a range of learning effects in terms of improved management and implementation practices at both the central and country level, although the learning function lacks the necessary structure and recognition to be perceived positively by NIMD's own staff.

4.2 Selected programme results

The following results demonstrate the contribution of the SPDD programme to its overall objective. The results are structured along the building blocks of the ToC, namely (political) system, actor, culture level change, and gender (equality) as a cross-cutting theme.

System level

In terms of progress towards system-level change, the variety in nature and success among country programmes is apparent. Clear progress was observed in terms of the scope and quality of multiparty dialogue in the majority of the 16 programme countries, in different forms and at both national and sub-national levels (see also table 1). An example of a country-level result in multiparty dialogue is the passing of a bill on food safety in schools in Shan State, Myanmar, in 2019 (see textbox 4, below).

> **Textbox 4: Substantiated outcome statement, illustrating a result from multiparty platform in Myanmar**
>
> **Outcome -** On 11 June 2019, during the 15th session of Shan State Parliament in Taunggyi, Shan state, the 12 MPs of Multiparty Dialogue Platform signed the Shan State Law of Food Safety in Basic Education School bill and submitted it to the Shan State parliament.
>
> **Contribution claim -** The Multiparty Dialogue Platform in Shan State met 11 times for dialogue sessions since May 2017. Their secretariat is formed by the Myanmar School of Politics (MySoP – made up of NIMD Myanmar and Demo Finland) team, who organized and facilitated dialogue sessions in three parts of the State. During this process, MySoP invited trainers from local and international backgrounds to lead the discussion issues surrounding food safety. MySoP then created an exchange visit opportunity to Indonesia in June 2018 to focus more on this thematic issue. The MySoP team translated laws on food safety from Thailand, India and China into Myanmar language in order to make available more ideas and perspectives on food safety.

Electoral reforms are an important system-level improvement, which can be seen in about half of the programme countries. In Uganda, for example, the agreement to review the Public Order Management Act (POMA) – which limited the possibilities for (opposition) parties to hold rallies, is a case in point. This example shows how strengthened interparty dialogue can go hand-in-hand with electoral reform. In Honduras, the NIMD office developed the concept for and helped to set up a "Clean Politics Unit"

(*Unidad Política Limpia*), which now sits alongside the Electoral Management Board to reinforce transparency in political campaign and election finance.

Actor level

In terms of actor-level change, the nature and pace of progress differ substantially from country to country, largely determined by the openness and responsiveness of political actors to capacity-development interventions. In Ethiopia, the staff of the legislative branch of Ethiopia's Oromiya State – CAFFEE – have been supported in gaining skills in conflict management and resolution; planning and policy cycle; planning and budget; and legislative drafting skills. In addition, they gained insights into intergovernmental relations between the federal government and regional states, and the role of the regional state councils in terms of oversight and outreach.

Capacity strengthening of partners/country offices also falls under the actor-level change. Eight NIMD partners and country office have reported an improved score in their organizational capability scan (see Annex D).

Culture level

Changes in political culture were observed as significant signs of progress in practising constructive dialogue to overcome political disagreements. The changes were viewed as a better alternative to a more confrontational/polarized dialogue. Another sign of progress was found in the improved dialogue between political actors and civil society representatives, such as the national inclusive dialogue in Mali (see textbox 4). In other cases, Democracy Schools have been instrumental in this respect, as they bring together a group for longer-term exposure to democratic norms and values.

Textbox 5: Substantiated outcome statement, illustrating a culture-level result in Mali

Outcome - The national inclusive dialogue organized by the Malian Government at the end of 2019 agreed to prioritize the moralization of politics.

Contribution claim: NIMD is credited with making a decisive contribution in raising awareness among nearly all actors in Malian political life – including voters – about the need to moralize political life in the country. This result was achieved thanks to the preliminary research work conducted by NIMD on the cost of politics in Mali. NIMD's report showed hard evidence to all involved concerning the financial expenditure needed to win elections in the country. The figures presented in NIMD's report were staggering and acted as a very strong wake-up call to broad sectors of Malian society. Well-known artists became convinced of the need to convey the key messages that advocate for the moralization of political life in Mali, which proved very influential among different groups of Malian society

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Gender & Inclusion

Making headway towards the broader participation of women in politics has been one of NIMD's more challenging objectives, although not for lack of trying. Gender equality is a more prominent programme feature in some programme countries than in others, as a result of different levels of

confidence and experience in addressing gender inequality among NIMD programme staff and country partners.

In Kenya, NIMD's partner, CMD, presented solid evidence to party leaders that they needed to act decisively to erode barriers to women's political participation, at least within their parties. With CMD's support, all CMD-member parties therefore reduced their nomination fees for women candidates by 50% in 2017.

In Benin, several political parties have recently set a two-term limit on their MPs. This is directly geared towards enabling young party members – in particular women – to become candidates. However, the material impact of these rules remains strongly hindered by the central importance of money in Beninese politics.

Table 1: Comparative results overview 2017-2020

Indicator	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of dialogue platforms	12	12	11	11
Number of dialogue platforms meetings held	66	78	108	113
Number of agreements reached as a result of dialogue platform meetings	58	65	81	78
Number of proposals submitted to the parliament	5	19	12	23
Number of political parties participating in dialogue platforms	75	304	231	206
Number of political parties trained	119	221	286	208
Number of Democracy Schools	6	6	5	5
Number of Democracy School graduates	611	830	731	719

4.3 Challenges & lessons learned

Based on the evaluation, at least three lessons learned and recommendations will be important for NIMD programming going forward.

Firstly, NIMD's unique vision of "inclusive and transparent democracies through stronger political parties" should be retained as a starting point for future programmes, as it remains relevant and effectively communicates both NIMD's ambition and its (unique) position in pursuit of this ambition. However, the programme framework itself needs to be adapted to facilitate planning and reporting. The lesson learned is to continue using actor-based pathways of change to facilitate planning and reporting processes, at both the international and country programme levels. This will give our country teams the freedom in choosing the most relevant political actors to target and prompt them to

articulate the nature and scale of behavioural changes that they strive to achieve. We will also need to improve the management of expectations and risk through a retrospective construction of underlying assumptions at the corporate, programme, and country levels as a way to retain the relevance and success of future programmes.

Secondly, in recognition of the complexity and maturity of NIMD's programmes, we will need to institutionalize adaptive programming practices to improve relevance and efficiency. This has direct implications for planning, budgeting and reporting processes. It also bears consequences for shaping future partner relations and the learning function in NIMD's programmes, which translate into a set of interrelated, mutually reinforcing recommendations. This point has been reiterated in various internal end-of-programme reflection reports.

Thirdly, for the participation of women in politics to become a more central feature of NIMD activities, it is essential we develop i) specific/thematic skill-development tools (including internal training cycles), supported by ii) toolkits to ensure that gender support is mainstreamed in the work of every country programme. In addition, we must strive for deeper and more sustained progress in women's political participation in each programme country, which can survive politically-minded attempts to reverse it. This can be achieved by applying a stronger gender focus in every new Political Economy Analysis (PEA) exercise, as well as making NIMD Democracy Schools and political party training programmes key vehicles for promoting women's participation in every programme country. For the full set of findings, conclusions and recommendations please see: Final evaluation of the Strategic Partnership on Dialogue and Dissent - NIMD.

The external evaluation, as well as most of the end-of-programme reports, express concerns regarding the sustainability of the SPDD results. This is, of course, a concern for countries in which the funding, partnership or programme discontinues. Moreover, the results of the SPDD programme are vulnerable and subject to the (changing) will of political actors. The following quote from an end-of-programme report sums it up nicely: "This work takes time and multi-annual support is necessary".

Another observation from the reports is that interventions should not end with the approval of an electoral reform bill; subsequent support is needed for the intervention to become systemic and lasting. It is also important to stay focused and not to drop issues, even if other topics become more current. "Keep the issue on the table", was the exact expression the NIMD office in Guatemala used. In similar vein, NIMD Uganda drew the lesson of developing a long-term agenda for their interparty dialogue in order to avoid "knee jerk engagements which are quick fixes". For good reasons, an element of a revolving door comes alongside the political cycles. One partner suggested creating an induction strategy for newly elected parliamentarians, in order to partly retain the capacities that have been build.

Other lessons learned concern the type of interventions, type of actors and ways of working. Most of these lessons learned appear to be context specific; here we will just highlight a few. While many country programmes have made a shift towards more civic involvement, the lesson for our partner in Kenya and offices in Honduras and El Salvador is to organize more bottom-up approaches, such as community dialogues and civic education. NIMD Guatemala shifted its main focus from elected representatives, to young people in the cadres of political parties and emergent political parties. While, in Myanmar, a lesson learned is to keep the relationships with political leadership close and keep

leaders in the loop regarding developments in the multiparty dialogue platform. This proved important for the success of the dialogue platform.

These learnings underline the importance of continuous adaptation and the need for good information to set the foundations for programmatic decisions. Most of the end-of-programme reports stress the need for more and better research, M&E data and/or documentation to instigate reflection and inform programmatic decisions. Moreover, in order to understand what works, post-project monitoring is of vital importance – it can help evaluate, for instance, how the strengthened capacity of political parties or Democracy School students is sustained and translates into social change over time.

Research has also proved to be a good programmatic tool to raise awareness and effect change. One example is the *Cost of Politics* study in Mali (see textbox 5). And, for our Guatemala office, research has been both a source for informing programmatic decisions and a programmatic tool. Studies such as "The glass ceiling: Patriarchal Barriers to Political Participation of Women in Guatemala" and Silvia Trujillo's study on political violence against women in positions of power were relevant and useful for the entire programme cycle, and an important exercise in documenting the voices of excluded groups. The staff in Guatemala recognize that more studies of this type were necessary and could have been further exploited, to feed into planning and contribute to civil society capacity building and awareness among political actors*.

Lastly, in a couple of reflection reports, an appeal was made to look for more synergies with like-minded organizations. In El Salvador, joint work with UN Women and NDI has been vital to ensuring that work with women politicians is maintained or achieves a considerable scope. This has also been the case regarding political dialogue within the Legislative Assembly. Likewise, in Mozambique, the synergy with other CSOs made it easier to access and target groups such as women and youth. This has been instrumental in increasing the interest of young people and women in participating in political processes, and in defending their agenda in front of elected politicians.

5. Financial overview

The Financial Report can be found in Annex A of this report. The approved budget for 2020 was **€6,726,072**. This is based on the updated Annual Plan submitted in July 2020 as approved by the MFA in October 2020, integrating the underspending from previous years. The actual expenditure in 2020 is **€6,612,637**. This means **98%** of our budget was put to effect in 2020, with a total underspending of **€113,435**.

As the underspending of previous years is brought forward each year, this means the overall cumulative underspending is also **€113,435**. On the total budget (2016-2020) of **€30,813,140** (after corrections for AWEPA and savings presented in 2018), this means an underspending of just **0.4%.** Compared to the original awarded amount (without corrections for AWEPA or savings), this represents an underspending of 4.2% (€1,350,490).

	Budget	Actuals	
2016	€ 6.631.190	€ 5.314.501	
2017	€ 6.540.286	€ 7.044.349	
2018	€ 6.721.769	€ 5.187.191	
2019	€ 6.080.227	€ 6.541.027	
2020	€ 6.076.723	€ 6.612.637	
Total	**€ 32.050.195**	**€ 30.699.705**	**€ 1.350.490**

Savings 2018	€	256.727
Awepa	€	980.328
Overall underspending	€	113.435
	€	**1.350.490**

In the last column of the Financial Report (Annex A), explanations are provided for deviations of more than 10% in country programmes and cross-cutting programmes, as compared to the approved 2020 budget. Explanations are also included for budget-line-level deviations of more than 25%.

Annex A: Financial Report
Annex B: Intermediate outcome measurements
Annex C: SPDD indicators 2020
Annex D: Outcome indicator measurement
Annex D: Human Interest Stories