

# NIMD

PARTNER IN DEMOCRACY

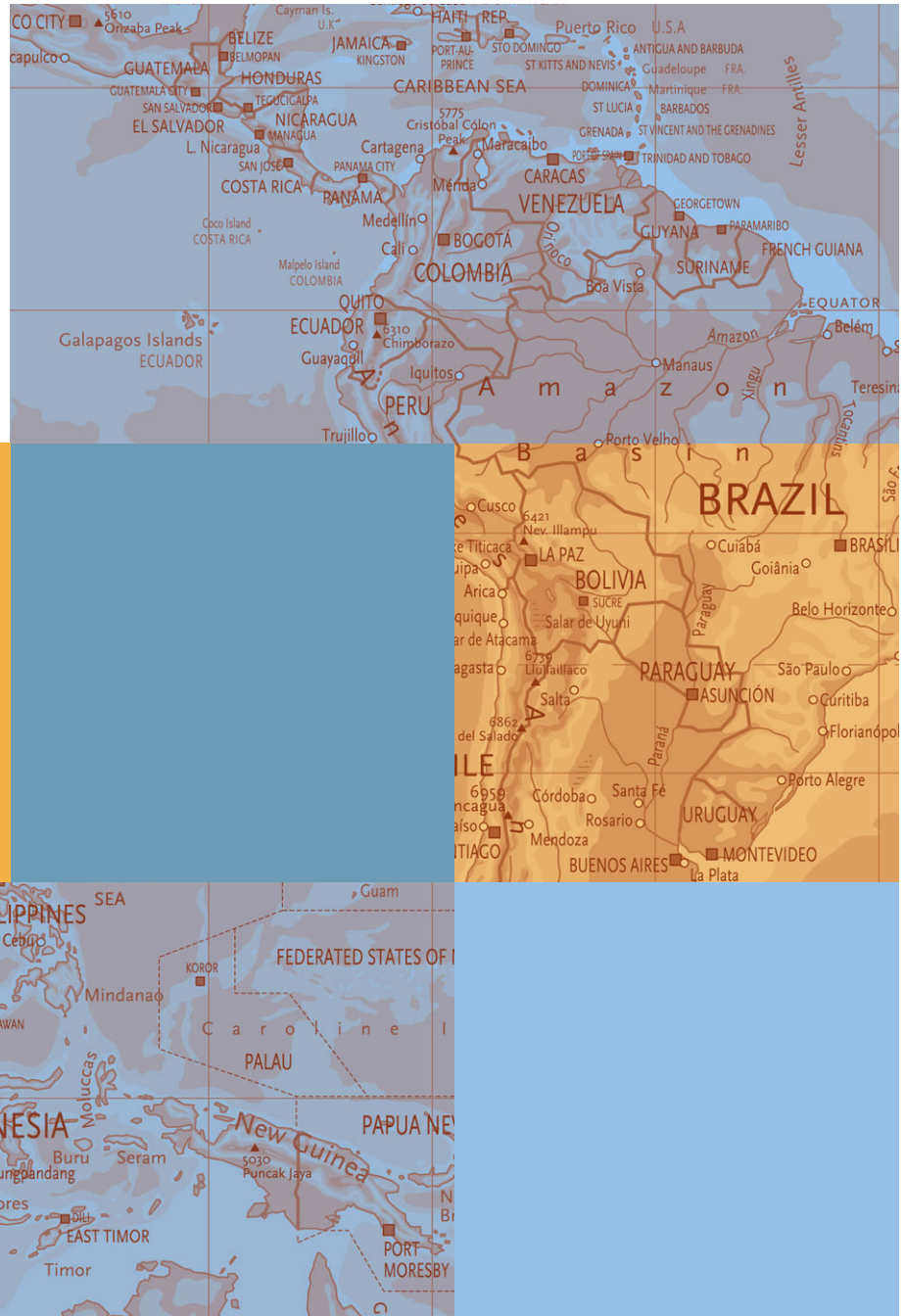
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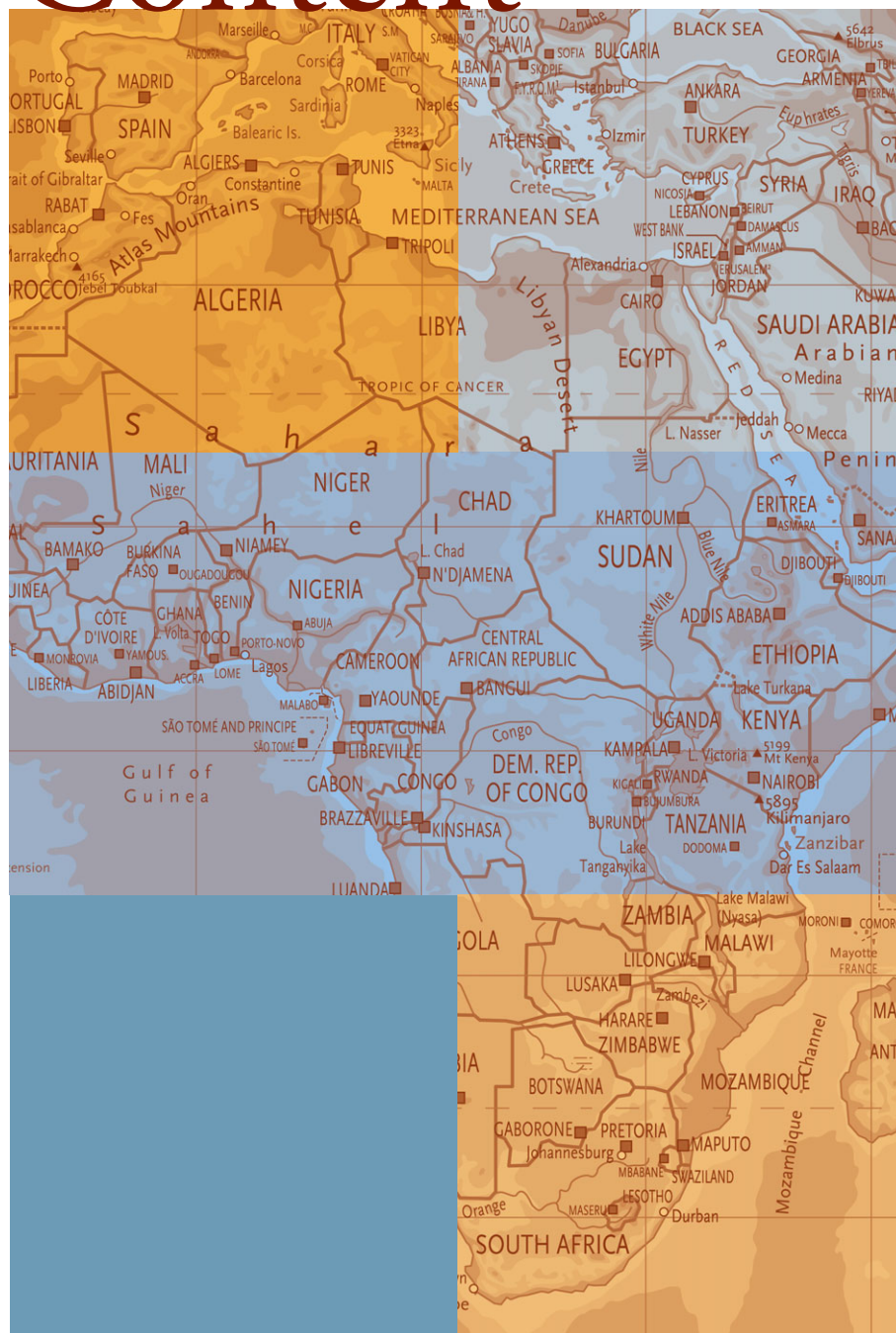
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P O L I T I C A L P A R T I E S  
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T H E I M D A P P R O A C H

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# The missing link of political parties



Political parties are often the missing link in democracy assistance. Yet, they are essential institutions in political society (that set of institutions and procedures that is distinct from either the state, civil society or the market). Political parties are the

least-trusted institutions in most countries.

To make democracy work, support for political parties, and for the development of the political systems that regulate their existence and functioning, is of strategic importance.

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### Three agendas

During the last decade the importance of democracy assistance has moved up the agendas in international cooperation. Democracy and development are seen as two sides of the same coin. However, democracy is positively correlated not only to development, but also to security (conflict prevention). Development (aimed at reducing poverty and providing social justice), security (defined as human security under the guarantees of a functioning rule of law), and democracy (defined as keeping government accountable to its citizens) are interrelated agendas for improving the human condition. The nexus of the three agendas - democracy, poverty reduction and security - forms the new challenge of our time.

institutions that select leadership, aggregate the interests of citizens in formulating policies and programmes, are instrumental in the organization of elections, provide the electorate with choices, form governments and hold these accountable through opposition.

At the same time, political parties are generally perceived as ineffective and they belong to the

The paradigm that democracy follows economic development has at the same time become



Mr J.P. Balkenende,  
Prime Minister  
of the Netherlands,  
addressing the  
audience at the  
IMD Conference  
'Enhancing the  
European Profile in  
Democracy Assistance'  
(5-6 July 2004)  
in The Hague

obsolete. People all over the world demand free and fair elections and favour democratic systems of governance even in the face of widespread disappointment in the functioning of the institutions of democracy, in particular political

## Assisting democratic reform poses new challenges in working with political society and its interaction with the state, civil society and the private sector.

parties and parliaments. Also, the premise that transitions from authoritarian systems of governance to democracy follow a straight line has been belied by reality. Many countries have experienced a transition but have not transformed into democracies. Assisting democratic reform poses new challenges in working with political society and its interaction with the state, civil society and the private sector. In addition,

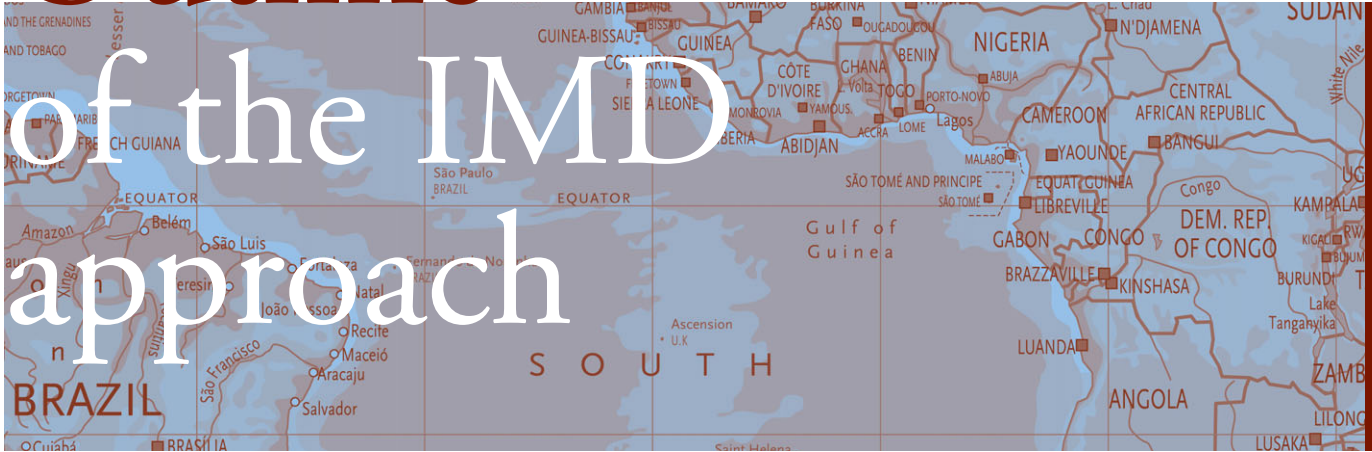
it poses new challenges to the manner in which assistance or aid is delivered.

### Dual responsibility

Institutional development of political parties cannot be seen in isolation from the political system and how it functions. The constitutional provisions, the electoral system, the political party laws and supervisory bodies are all elementary building blocs for the environment in which political parties function. This environment is further determined by the strength of civil society and of the media and their relationship with the political parties. Generally speaking political parties have a common interest in a well-functioning multiparty political system and have an individual interest in their own institutional development. This dual responsibility is the entry point for the political party support provided by the IMD.

# Outline

# of the IMD approach



The IMD is an institute based on inter-party cooperation in the Netherlands with the mandate to support political parties in young or emerging democracies while also helping to consolidate

Democracy is often promoted without taking political parties into account.

multiparty democracies. As such, the IMD works in principle together with all legally registered political parties (and political groupings) in partner countries, including both governing and opposition parties. The IMD favours systems of multiparty democracy but is impartial in supporting political parties.

The political parties participating in the IMD decided to cooperate in implementing this mandate based on the following premises:

- Democracy does not exist without political parties.
- Political parties generally perform poorly.
- Democracy is often promoted without taking political parties into account.
- Reproduction of our political parties abroad does not work.

- Working together allows the pooling of resources, the sum of which can make a difference.
- Working together also provides the opportunity for a coherent and comprehensive country analysis about how democracy can best be supported.
- The joint responsibility for implementing the mandate implies that parties can and should work together to advance social and political cohesion and contribute to nation and state building.

## Specific circumstances

In each partner country, the assistance provided by the IMD focuses on direct party support and support for cross-party initiatives. The exact mix of these two main kinds of intervention depends on the specific circumstances in each of the partner countries. The mix and its specific evolution over time is the result of consultations with all political parties and other relevant stakeholders involved in the country.

The combination of direct party support and cross-party support has resulted in many cases in increased dialogue between governing and opposition parties. This dialogue includes a review of the performance of a country's multiparty political system and identification of what can be done to fix deficiencies.

(From left to right):  
Mr A.C.A. van der Wiel,  
Dutch Ambassador  
in Ghana,  
Mr Roel von Meijenfeldt,  
Director of the IMD,  
Prof. Dr. J.A. van Kemenade,  
President of the IMD,  
and His Excellency  
Mr John Kufuor,  
President of Ghana



Inter-party dialogue and cooperation in cross-party programmes contribute to increased levels of trust among politicians across the political divides. They also lead to new forms of institutionalization of such dialogue and inter-party cooperation.

### Full ownership

IMD programmes aim to facilitate reform agendas that are the result of either an inter-party or individual party's strategic planning process. These 'home-grown' agendas that reflect the need for full ownership of the process by the political stakeholders - taking into account that democracy cannot be exported - provide the compass for assistance to the strategic activities identified by the stakeholders.

At a theoretical level, the interventions are supposed to make a contribution to three more or less interrelated objectives within the IMD's mandate:

- Reduce polarization and increase social and political cohesion.
- Reduce fragmentation and increase stability and predictability in the political system.
- Enhance the institutionalization of political parties, peaceful conflict resolution and policy development within the multiparty political system.

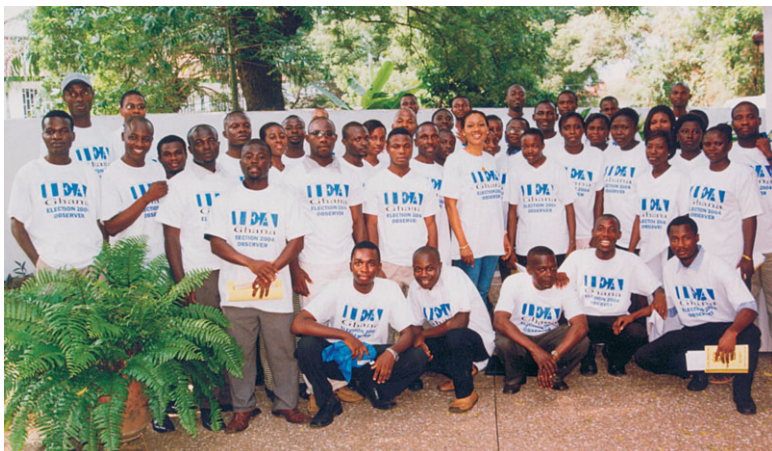
### Facilitating dialogue

In Bolivia the political parties formed the FUBODEM (Bolivian Foundation for Multiparty Democracy), which currently is the only institution in the country that enables political parties to continue to engage each other in discussions about how to move the country out of the political crisis. In Kenya the political parties launched the Centre for Multiparty Democracy - Kenya (CMD-K) in September 2004 and produced an elaborate strategic programme that focuses on eleven substantial reform issues, ranging from the constitutional reform process

Inter-party dialogue and cooperation in cross-party programmes contribute to increased levels of trust among politicians across the political divides.

to new legislation for funding of political parties. Similar institutions are in the making in Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Guatemala. In Ghana the political parties cooperate very effectively through





IEA election  
observers 2004  
in Ghana

the Ghanaian Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), which contributed much to the positive and peaceful electoral process in preparation of and during the parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2004. As one senior Ghanaian politician observed: ‘The politicians of the different political parties have learned to disagree without becoming disagreeable.’

The strong emphasis on facilitating dialogue in all of the IMD’s programmes has the explicit purpose of contributing to the culture and practice of

‘The politicians of the different political parties have learned to disagree without becoming disagreeable.’

democracy itself and of generating higher levels of trust within the political system that should lead to less polarization and violent conflict. For the IMD, the process through which its

assistance is delivered is as important as the focus on the results which are pursued. In fact, in the IMD’s experience the high level of ownership that empowers the counterparts is the single most important explanation for the positive results obtained in the programmes.

### Collective participation

The IMD also invites the political parties collectively to participate in inter-party dialogue to develop the modalities for support to political parties individually. This allows the parties to agree on a framework for a fully transparent disbursement of funds to the political parties based on criteria that can be monitored by all. To qualify for direct funding, political parties are invited to undertake strategic planning exercises within their parties. This process is supported by the IMD. These strategic planning exercises should be participative and should result in an action programme that identifies the strategic reforms and investments needed to develop the party in the direction it wants to go. It is generally agreed that parties should become more policy-oriented, they should practise internal democracy and become institutions that continue to function in between elections.

The collective participation of political parties allows the IMD to allocate funds and other resources to priorities determined by the parties themselves, whereas the strategic plans provide milestones through which the parties can monitor progress made towards the set objectives. The frameworks agreed upon by the political parties include performance-based criteria. The parties’ performance is monitored by applying two sets of criteria: timely delivery of narrative and financial reports and achievement of the objectives defined in the strategic plan. Well-performing parties may qualify for higher levels of funding, while parties that do not perform adequately lose their ‘drawing rights’.

# The institutional set-up of the IMD



The IMD was formally established in 2000 by almost all the political parties represented in the Dutch Parliament. The seven participating parties include the three major parties representing the main political ideologies in the Netherlands, Christian democracy, social democracy and liberalism, and four smaller parties across the political spectrum. Three of the seven parties make up the current government coalition, and the other four are currently opposition parties. Each party has one representative on the Board of Directors of the IMD, which is chaired by an impartial President. The President is an elderly statesman. The IMD is registered as a foundation under Dutch law and as such qualifies as a non-governmental organization, part of Dutch civil society.

## Unique feature

Before the establishment of the IMD, all seven parties had cooperated in the Foundation for a New South Africa (NZA). In response to the transition from apartheid to multiparty democracy in South Africa in 1994, and as an expression of the continued commitment of the Dutch political parties to the democratization process in South Africa, NZA provided financial support to all parliamentary political parties in South Africa to assist them with

their institutional development. Former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela recognized the value of this support and suggested at the time that it also be made available to other young democracies. That comment triggered an initial expansion of support to Mozambique. After the interests and needs of various countries were subsequently studied and assessed, a vastly expanded programme was established, initially aiming at eleven countries on three continents. A proper professional institution was thus needed to manage the expanded mandate and new challenges. Hence the IMD was established and commenced to operate.

The unique feature of the IMD's mandate and institutional composition is reflected in a combination of staff, charged with management of the programmes, and staff of the participating political parties, charged with management of the overall policy priorities of the programmes. In addition, the staff of the participating political parties is responsible for communication with and mobilization of technical expertise within their respective parties. Because of its principled position on local ownership of the process, the IMD decided not to establish offices in partner countries



Stephen Sackur, BBC's Chief Europe correspondent, during the IMD Conference 'Enhancing the European Profile in Democracy Assistance' (5-6 July 2004) in The Hague

(with the exception of one office in Guatemala and a regional representation for East and Southern Africa based in Johannesburg, South Africa), but to work through locally available capacity or encourage the establishment of such capacity. The result is a networking institution with limited overhead and substantial resources for hands-on programme support of sensitive political processes. A tailor-made electronic process management system allows for a transparent and efficient flow of information through all levels of the organization.

### **Programmatic approach**

The networking nature of the IMD puts high demands on the managerial coordination function. This function is implemented by ensuring a sharp focus on the niche that the IMD represents within the international cooperation arena. Short lines of communication within the organization allow for flexible responses within the agreed programme frameworks to arising opportunities or to changing circumstances. For the political context in which the IMD programmes operate, this is an essential requirement on which the relevance and impact of the IMD's interventions rely. The work is high risk, but can reap high political rewards if managed properly.

The core institutional funding for the IMD is provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Funding is made available on the basis of a four-year strategic programme. This allows the IMD to use a multi-annual programmatic approach in its relations with and support for its counterparts. The current four-year programme titled 'Without Democracy Nobody Fares Well' covers the period 2003 - 2006. The IMD submits a narrative report twice annually about the development of its programmes and submits on an annual basis its financial reports and its annual work programme. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the IMD meet twice annually to discuss the results of the programmes and the lessons learned.

### **New initiatives**

Within the IMD a separate unit has been established for joint ventures with multi- and bilateral donor organizations. The successful cooperation with UNDP in Guatemala in facilitating the Shared National Agenda that is currently being implemented in the government programme and in the legislative programme in the Congress in Guatemala has provided the model for new initiatives along these lines. A joint programme with UNDP in Nicaragua has recently been launched with support from DFID, SIDA and the Dutch government. A programme in

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Georgia has started in cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR. Through this cooperation the IMD hopes to be able to make its expertise in supporting the consolidation of multiparty political systems and the institutionalization of political parties available to a wider of group of young democracies.

# The IMD



The IMD focuses specifically on low-income countries that are in the process of consolidating multiparty democracy. In its early stages the IMD conducted research on a large group of countries that qualified in this category based on their prospects, interests and need for the kind of cooperation the IMD offers. At the start the following countries were selected: Mali, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Guatemala, Surinam, Bolivia and Indonesia. In the meantime, Kenya, Georgia and Nicaragua have been incorporated in the programme and cooperation with the political parties in South Africa has been resumed.

## More regional networks

Cooperation with a sizeable number of countries in East and Southern Africa has recently resulted in the establishment of the Regional Multiparty Forum in which 36 political parties, including parties in government and in opposition, cooperate. In the near future, the IMD hopes to expand its cooperation in young democracies in the sub-regions in which it is currently engaged, notably East and Southern Africa, West Africa, Central America, the Andean region, and Southeast Asia. This will make it possible to facilitate more regional networks of political parties

through which information about reform processes can be shared and positive performance can be encouraged on the basis of peer reviews. In this regard the first experiences with the Forum in East and Southern Africa are encouraging.

The IMD counterparts in countries where direct financial and technical assistance is allowed under the prevailing legal statutes are foremost the political parties themselves. Where political parties are institutionalizing their cooperation in centres for multiparty democracy (or institutions with similar

Collaboration between democracy-assisting agencies should never result in a decrease in the level of local ownership over the reform process and programmes.

names), these centres become additional partner institutions for the IMD. In some countries, political parties have chosen to cooperate through an existing local institution trusted by all the political parties



Dr Madeleine Albright, former US Secretary of State and Chairman of NDI, and Dr Mampela Ramphele, Managing Director World Bank, during the IMD Conference 'Enhancing the European Profile in Democracy Assistance' (5-6 July 2004) in The Hague

such as the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA) in Ghana. The programme framework in Indonesia focuses on bridging the divide between political and civil society in five regions of Indonesia and is facilitated by an Indonesian organization, the *Komunitas Indonesia untuk Demokrasi* (Indonesian Community for Democracy - KID), which resulted from the consultations about the programme framework.

### Own priorities

Partnerships are also being established with other agencies that have mandates to support democratic reform processes and in particular those institutions supporting political parties. Reference has been made to the successful cooperation with UNDP in Guatemala, as well as the emerging cooperation with UNDP in Nicaragua and OSCE/ODIHR in Georgia. Depending on which organizations are engaged in the IMD partner countries, the IMD works closely with a range of organizations among which the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Foundation for Electoral Assistance (IFES), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the Organization of American States (OAS), the various German political

foundations such as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FND). Collaboration between democracy-assisting agencies should never result in a decrease in the level of local ownership over the reform process and programmes. Hence, it is important that inter-party dialogue and cooperation are institutionalized, allowing the political parties themselves to coordinate the international assistance according to their own priorities. The Centre for Multiparty Democracy - Kenya is currently setting an example in managing this process.

### Nation and state building

The IMD is frequently requested to consider engaging in countries that have experienced violent conflicts and that are making a new start with the process of peaceful nation and state building. The IMD board recently decided to study the possibilities for IMD programmes in Afghanistan and in Burundi. If such programmes materialize, the IMD will need to develop specific expertise in working in societies that have endured exceptional stress and where states and the political process have to be rebuilt in the midst of difficult security environments.

# The IMD

# knowledge centre construction



The IMD is aware that it operates in a professional field - democracy assistance - for which there are few textbooks available. For this reason, the IMD is putting much emphasis on regular external evaluation of its programmes. External evaluations are available for the Mozambique, Guatemala, Bolivia and Ghana programmes. The IMD management strongly encourages a learning attitude within the operations of the IMD and is keen to share lessons learned.

In consultation with political parties in Latin America and in Africa, a first handbook on the institutional development of political parties has been produced that identifies three dimensions:

- political system reforms that benefit the institutional development of political parties;
- reforms within the political parties;
- nexus between political parties and civil society.

## Data base

The experience obtained in the programmes and the 'best practices' introduced in political systems and in internal political party reforms will be made accessible through a database at the IMD website ([www.nimd.org](http://www.nimd.org)).

In addition, the IMD is in the process of setting up a data base with available political party expertise in the Netherlands and their expertise on specific policy areas in the regions of operation. With the evolution

Democracy assistance is a professional field for which there are few textbooks available.

of the inter-party and intra-party dialogue agendas increasing the demand for information, this system will be aimed at making specialized and quality expertise readily available. It will also offer the opportunity to create links with existing electronic data bases on subjects relevant to the political reform agendas supported in the IMD programmes.

# Operational assistance



The direct funding component of the IMD's approach is definitely an attractive feature for political parties in young democracies that are often in need of cash. Yet, in the IMD's experience this is frequently just a first reflex. The fact that the IMD itself is built on the inter-party cooperation of seven political parties is usually quickly recognized as an important model for overcoming inter-party polarization and worse. Often politicians in young democracies note that such cooperation had not been considered possible under their circumstances, given the single focus on competition for power rather than on the accommodation and reconciliation dimensions of democracy.

## **Empowering politicians**

As we have seen, political parties are also non-players in the delivery of international assistance. They do not play a role in the formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, or in technical assistance programmes for constitutional or electoral reform processes. Much of this assistance is negotiated with government agencies (the state) with the involvement of some civil society organizations. Sometimes, parliaments have become involved in order to formalize the outcome of these processes. But the

involvement of government, for example, does not guarantee the involvement of the governing party, let alone of the opposition political parties. With the emphasis on governance by the international donor community, which tends to neglect the subject of democracy, much assistance that is directly relevant to the consolidation of democracy is delivered by means of a technical approach to technical committees.

Political parties are confronted with the outcomes of this assistance. The manner in which this assistance is delivered makes politicians objects of change rather than the subjects of the reform processes. It is a mistake to believe that

It is a mistake to believe that countries can develop stable and sustainable systems of governance without empowering politicians to do so.



countries can develop stable and sustainable systems of governance without empowering politicians to do so. In the IMD approach, the politicians are back in the driving seat. Problems that are essentially political in nature are addressed by the politicians. That has perhaps become the most appreciated added value in the partnership that the IMD programme offers.

### Basic skills

In the facilitation of this process, basic technical expertise is offered in strategic planning skills, strengthening of internal democracy, scouting of new talent, preparation of party programmes, electioneering capacity, project proposal writing, accounting skills, et cetera. Strict auditing procedures are applied to reduce temptations for corruption and auditing firms are used to provide training on bookkeeping and financial management skills. These are basic skills needed by every political party with the ambition of growing into a lasting institution.

In addition, the cross-party programmes offer the opportunity to share content information

and knowledge about key areas in the consolidation of multiparty democracy including electoral systems, electoral processes, laws on the

The missing link of political parties needs to be included if democracy is to be consolidated.

There is no way around them.

regulation and funding of political parties and constitutional reviews. The regional and international networks of political parties provide the opportunity to learn directly from practices elsewhere. Such visits, away from the turmoil at home, also create opportunities for inter-party reflections on some of the major challenges in national reform processes.



# Some preliminary lessons learned



It takes leadership on the part of the political elites, constituted by both governing and opposition parties, to acknowledge that, in the interests of the country, the political practice has to change.

The missing link of political parties needs to be included if democracy is to be consolidated. There is no way around them. Moreover, the politicians in young democracies are open to and interested in engaging in the IMD's cooperation programmes and in a number of cases in joint ventures with UNDP and others.

## **Engage constituencies**

As has been argued, political parties are generally not well-functioning institutions. Opinion polls almost everywhere indicate that they belong to the institutions that are least trusted by the general public. The basis of many political parties is often narrow in the case of opposition parties and in the

case of many governing parties the state has taken over the functions of the party. Most parties hibernate until elections are looming. They usually lack resources to build up institutional capacity to engage constituencies between elections. Internal democracy is rarely practised. Financial resources depend on a few rich individuals who bankroll a system of money politics. Opposition parties are sometimes formed by governing parties as decoys in the political arena to divide and complicate opposition politics.

It takes leadership on the part of the political elites, constituted by both governing and opposition parties, to acknowledge that, in the interests of the country, the political practice has to change. By engaging in a dialogue process through which the levels of trust increase, reform proposals can be introduced that over time can generate the momentum for a genuine consolidation process. Guatemala and Ghana are both making interesting progress with this approach.

## **Will to reform**

An important lesson learned is that one cannot engage political parties at face value and start by



investing money in their development. In fact, this approach may add to the problems that fragile and polarized systems of governance already have. In young democracies, divisions are often deep and mistrust rife while states are weak. International intervention - specifically in the political arena - should take the greatest care not to compound the divisions.

In the IMD's experience, political parties should be invited to engage in inter-party and intra-party dialogues that produce a genuine will to reform and agendas for strategic intervention to which the international community can respond. Failure to meet these objectives should result in disqualification

An important lesson learned is that one cannot engage political parties at face value and start by investing money in their development.

for assistance. Cross-party cooperation works in this respect as a useful instrument for peer review and social control to stimulate the performance of participating parties while neutralizing the inevitable spoilers in political reform processes. Generally, direct financial assistance can be provided if the agendas have been developed and a transparent, jointly agreed framework and modalities are in place.

Because of the many sensitivities involved, the IMD has encouraged the political parties in programme countries to select eminent personalities in their societies to function as Advisory Boards to the programmes and the IMD. These Advisory Boards have been helpful in avoiding conflicts and in providing guidance with respect to the strategic issues in the partnership relations between the IMD and its counterparts.

### **Legitimacy**

Furthermore, a choice had to be made by the IMD on whether the cooperation should be limited to the political parties represented in parliament only or should be extended to all registered political parties, including those not elected to be represented in parliament. In countries with free and fair elections,

Ballot box and candidate list  
2004  
Ghana elections



the parties in parliament obtain legitimacy from the electorate. Again on the basis of consultations with all stakeholders, the solution usually found is that the parties in parliament qualify for direct assistance while the cross-party programme is open for participation by all registered political parties to ensure the inclusive nature of the process. In countries with an unrealistically large number of registered political

Parties may be afraid that the media will expose them as weak or as selling out when entering into dialogue with their perceived antagonists.

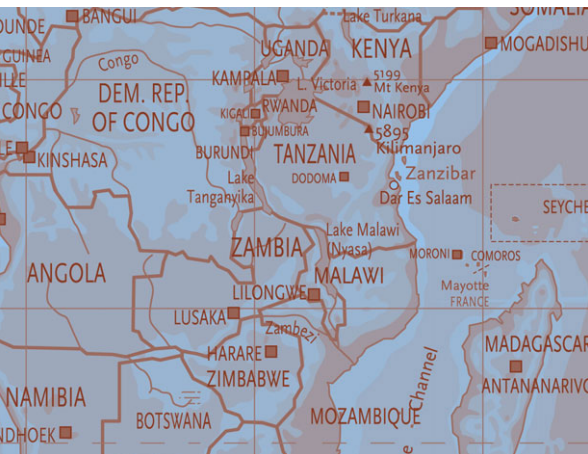
parties, initial consultations should lead to a preliminary selection of parties to be included. In Mali, for example, only 34 of the more than 90 registered parties are currently participating in the programme. This is still a high number but the performance criteria applied are expected to result in the eventual emergence of a smaller number of serious parties.

### Monitoring progress

The multiparty approach through which cross-party and direct party assistance is channelled has earned the IMD substantial political capital among the key political stakeholders in the partner countries. However, this approach also poses new challenges in assuring that agreed reform agendas are implemented. Practical contributions are needed to help multiparty systems work better and political parties perform better. The IMD is in the process of developing more specific indicators for impact in this field and hopes to use a planned institutional evaluation this year to that effect. The strategic programmes of cross-party cooperation and of the political parties are an essential starting point for monitoring progress, as experience in the Guatemala programme demonstrates. Hopefully, in due course, their impact can be measured in opinion polls that show whether perceptions about the performance of political parties have improved.

### Share responsibility

Political parties sometimes express the fear of losing their identities by entering into inter-party dialogue and cross-party cooperation. In addition, parties may be afraid that the media will expose them as weak or



Mr Kivuitu  
Electoral Commissioner  
Kenya

as selling out when entering into dialogue with their perceived antagonists. The level of acceptance of parties entering into dialogue is related to the prevailing political culture of a country. Where a coalition system exists, people are more used to dialogue, negotiations and agreements between parties than for example in a two-party system or a multiparty system with a dominant governing party. Nevertheless, experience shows that political parties do overcome such fears, once they accept that political parties collectively share responsibility for sound foundations of the political system in a country even though their interests differ when it comes to competing for the support of the electorate. In practice, the two responsibilities can be well reconciled.

#### Developing trust

The fact that political parties and political society have been missing in international assistance, while much aid in the context of democracy support has been invested in civil society, has not contributed to improved relations between the two sectors in many countries. The animosity between these two should receive special attention, so that political parties can become less defensive about the advocacy roles of

civil society organizations and civil society organizations can become more aware that undermining political parties is not in their interest since such an approach does not contribute to a stable democratic political system.

What counts is developing trust among the key stakeholders, as the basis upon which institutionalization of democratic processes can be nourished. Successful poverty reduction and increased human security presuppose a deepening

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of the democratic reform processes in which the politicians and their political parties are the key vehicles.



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