

Peer learning for political parties

NIMD's Africa Regional Exchange Programme



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Introduction

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NIMD's Africa Regional Programme (ARP) is premised on the understanding that despite the diversity of features that characterise the countries in Africa, the democratisation agenda faces a number of common challenges.

Mistakes made in one country tend to serve as a clear warning of what should be avoided elsewhere, while best practices provide proof of the fact that no problem is insurmountable. Thus, there is a lot that democracies within Africa can learn from each other.

What often is lacking is a forum or framework through which this learning and sharing of experiences can take place. ARP provides political parties with a much needed platform for learning by linking them up with fellow politicians and relevant networks in the region, and providing them with research and training material.

ARP brings together governing and opposition political parties from the ten countries in the region which have an NIMD programme, namely: Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Through the facilitation of peer to peer exchanges, the organisation of regional conferences, the production of research papers, and the development of training material and toolkits on issues of common concern, ARP contributes to the effective implementation of the individual NIMD country programmes.

At the regional conferences, parties come together to interact, share experiences and address common challenges jointly. Through the exchange programmes, ARP facilitates tailor-made and carefully planned country-to-country visits. The regional programme also acts as a 'knowledge centre' by offering comparative information, research documents and training materials for political parties and other actors.

In line with its mandate, ARP has for several years organised and undertaken a series of exchange visits between partners and political parties in the African region, in order for participants to share experiences, exchange best practices and learn lessons from peers engaged in processes of constitutional or electoral reform, inter-party dialogue, and dialogue with electoral management bodies and other actors.

With a growing number of visits, and an increasingly complex set of outcomes from each exchange, we would like to highlight some of these exchange programmes and share them not only with our partners but also with other interested stakeholders.

We hope that by reading this publication, our partners will appreciate some of the efforts that NIMD, through ARP, undertakes in the hope of strengthening multiparty democracy in Africa.

More importantly, the results of these peer-to-peer exchanges also demonstrate that whilst international actors like NIMD can support democracy with their European experiences, many of the solutions to the challenges facing Africa's democratic agenda lie within the region itself.



Augustine Magolowondo (centre) at the regional exchange visit to Kenya in May 2010.

Learning how to avoid post-election violence

Exchange visit

Malawi → Kenya

Date

21–25 September 2008

Hosts

Centre for Multiparty Democracy

Kenya (CMD-K)

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Malawi prepares for elections

When Malawi was gearing up for its elections in 2009, the political climate was characterised by unprecedented political tensions. There were indicators that if not managed properly, the post-election violence that had devastated Kenya in 2008 might be repeated in Malawi.

Just as in Kenya, the opposition parties in Malawi had lost trust in the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), as it was perceived to be biased in favour of the governing party. The President had unilaterally appointed the Electoral Commissioners, when Malawi's constitution requires that this be done in consultation with the political parties represented in Parliament. In addition, the relationship between the main political parties was characterised by high levels of animosity.

It was against this background that the Centre for Multiparty Democracy Malawi (CMD-Malawi) made a deliberate decision to focus its 2008 activities on the 2009 elections. The exchange visit to Kenya was seen as an opportunity for the Malawian delegation – which included senior politicians, an Electoral Commissioner and a civil society representative – to learn what went wrong in the Kenyan electoral process.

Building confidence and trust

The exchange started with a joint workshop between the Malawi delegation and member political parties of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy Kenya (CMD-K), the host organisation. During this workshop, participants reviewed the challenges facing Malawi in the run-up to the 2009 elections. These challenges were juxtaposed against a critical assessment of the Kenyan electoral process and the bottlenecks that had resulted in the post-election violence.

The Malawi delegation also met with stakeholders who played different roles in the both pre- and post-election period in Kenya. The delegation had discussions with political parties, civil society organisations, and CMD-K. The delegation also met with Mr. Kivuitu, the then Chairperson of the now defunct Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK).

One key lesson that was drawn from this exchange was that transparency and building confidence and trust in the electoral process is fundamental. For this to happen, it was observed that there was need to create mechanisms that could facilitate constructive dialogue and consultations between the electoral management body and other key stakeholders.

What the Malawians did when they returned home

Following their return to Malawi, CMD-M embarked on a formal dialogue platform where political parties and the MEC could meet and discuss a wide range of issues relating to the electoral process. This platform was later joined by civil society members of the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN).

During these dialogue sessions, the stakeholders identified a number of areas of concern that needed to be addressed before the electoral process could be rendered credible. With time, the MEC opened up to the other stakeholders and ensured that the process was as transparent as possible. The stakeholders were also able to understand and follow the various steps in the electoral process and made sure that they were directly represented at all critical phases.

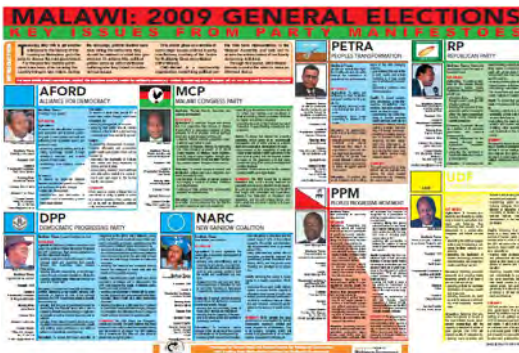
With the devastating impact of the Kenyan post-election crisis at the back of their minds, Malawian electoral stakeholders, with the support of CMD-M also committed themselves through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to ensure that they would do everything possible to avoid any kind of violence and that they would instead use all available legal avenues to present their grievances.

A credible electoral process

The overall result of all these initiatives was an electoral process which, although it started with a number of challenges, ended up being credible and acceptable to all parties. Those parties that had complaints took recourse to the Courts for redress. Countries such as Mozambique and Uganda, through subsequent exchange visits, also took a close look at what happened in Malawi. Today, the role that CMD-M played in the 2009 elections continues to serve as a model of good practice in the region.

"From that visit to Kenya, what we referred to as an important lesson was the importance of having a credible electoral commission and we went back home to try to enhance the credibility of our electoral commission and to improve the trust the political parties had in the electoral commission in Malawi."

Kizito Tenthani, Executive Director, CMD-Malawi



Political party programmes from the 2009 Malawi general elections, a supplement which appeared in Malawian newspapers and which was supported by CMD-Malawi.



A woman carrying her baby on her back casts her vote at an outdoor polling booth during Malawi's general elections in 2009.

Overcoming distrust between electoral actors

Exchange visit

Malawi → Mozambique

Date

2-3 September 2009

Hosts

NIMD Country Office,
Maputo

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Aiming for transparency

The aim of this exchange visit was to share experiences on how dialogue between electoral management bodies and political parties can contribute to a transparent electoral process. Participants included representatives of political parties, the electoral commission and civil society organisations from Mozambique and Malawi.

At the time of the visit, Mozambique was preparing for its national elections. As part of these preparations, the NIMD country office in Maputo began exploring ways to develop a forum through which the National Electoral Commission (CNE), registered political parties and other electoral stakeholders could share information, foster good working relations, and consult each other on electoral matters.

The exchange visit provided an opportunity for electoral stakeholders from Malawi to share their experience of a similar dialogue undertaken in the run-up to the Malawian general elections in early 2009. For their Mozambican hosts, it was an important and timely visit.

Visitors from Malawi included representatives of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC), the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN, an umbrella body of civil society organisations active in the field of elections), and NIMD's partner in Malawi, the Centre for Multiparty Democracy-Malawi (CMD-M), a forum established by Malawian political parties.

Overcoming distrust through dialogue

The main component of the exchange visit was a workshop on dialogue with electoral management bodies. Members of the Malawian delegation described the considerable amount of distrust that had previously existed between the political parties and the electoral management body in Malawi, the MEC.

They also demonstrated how, by meeting each other regularly, the distrust slowly disappeared and a situation developed whereby problems that came up could be discussed amicably, often resulting in a commonly agreed upon solution.

The input from the Malawian participants in the workshop provided the basis for appreciating the need for such a structured way of interaction among electoral stakeholders in Mozambique. Commissioner Chikoko of the MEC recalled her own experience of Malawi's 2009 general elections. She noted how important it was for the MEC to ensure that consultations with key stakeholders took place at every stage in the electoral process.

She admitted that the meetings were at times very tense and confrontational, with some political parties trying to infringe upon the MEC's responsibilities. However, "by being transparent and open to dialogue, we quickly regained the confidence of the stakeholders and we were able to run the Malawi elections in an atmosphere characterised by trust and mutual respect," she said.

What happened next

Participants agreed that a dialogue process would be very beneficial in the Mozambican context. The Mozambican political parties, civil society organisations and CNE therefore resolved to establish a dialogue platform in the run-up to their own general elections.

The dialogue platform that was launched as a result of this exchange visit presented an unique opportunity for all concerned stakeholders to come together and put their questions and problems to the CNE. A climate emerged whereby questions could be asked of the CNE and answers were heard by the parties. The multi-stakeholder meetings helped to improve the dialogue and communication among political parties themselves, and between the parties and electoral management bodies.

In a political context that has traditionally been characterised by high levels of distrust between the main political players, and low levels of interaction, this represented a remarkable step towards creating a space of more structured dialogue on issues of common interest.

This ultimately led to increased understanding of the actions of the CNE, and a reaffirmation of the Electoral Code of Conduct of 2004 by all political parties participating in the 2009 general elections.



Image from the workshop on enhancing dialogue between electoral stakeholders held in Maputo, September 2009.

Including all parties in dialogue processes

Exchange visit

Uganda → Ghana

Date

21-24 October 2009

Hosts

Institute of Economic Affairs

(IEA), Ghana

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Setting up an interparty dialogue platform

In 2009, upon the invitation of Uganda's parliamentary political parties, NIMD began facilitating an inclusive and permanent interparty dialogue process aimed at strengthening and consolidating the country's fledgling multiparty democracy.

As setting up an interparty dialogue platform is not an easy process, an exchange visit to Ghana was organised in October 2009 in order to expose the Ugandan political parties to Ghana's experiences with interparty dialogue.

The exchange visit provided an opportunity to facilitate information sharing and consultation between the Ugandan and Ghanaian political parties; to lay the foundation for an inclusive interparty dialogue forum for the Ugandan political parties; and to reach an agreement on the rules of engagement for the Uganda interparty dialogue process.

The exchange was notable for the fact that it brought together, for the first time, the secretaries general and senior NEC members of the six Ugandan political parties with representation in parliament.

Learning from Ghanaian political parties

The main component of the exchange visit was a workshop on inclusive interparty dialogue in Ghana. Members from the Ghanaian forum for political parties (GPPP) shared some valuable lessons with the Ugandan political parties in order to help the Ugandans fashion their own process.

The political parties in Ghana demonstrated how, by meeting each other regularly, they were able to create a conducive environment for political discussion, whereby problems that came up could be discussed amicably, often resulting in a commonly agreed upon solution. In fact, in Ghana the interparty dialogue platform has successfully helped establish free and fair elections, a peaceful change of power and democratic reforms.

The workshop, which was facilitated by former Ghanaian President John Kufuor, formed an important basis for appreciating the need for a structured way of interaction among political parties in Uganda.

Peaceful co-existence and dialogue

Participants agreed that an interparty dialogue process would be very beneficial in the Ugandan context. The political parties therefore agreed to move towards a more formal set-up for peaceful co-existence and dialogue in Uganda.

During the exchange visit a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was drafted, confirming the commitment of Uganda's political parties to the fundamental principles of democracy, good governance and peaceful dialogue.

In order to inform a wider cross-section of the executive in each party about the contents of the MoU and the benefits of entering into a dialogue process, the secretaries general of two Ghanaian parties travelled to Uganda in November 2009. This ensured a buy-in into the dialogue process from a wider cross-section of the parties.

In February 2010, during a special signing ceremony in the Ugandan capital Kampala, the Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue (IPOD) was officially launched.

The creation of IPOD

Never before had six political parties from Uganda sat round one table: one leader and five opposition parties. Augustine Ruzindana, head of the main opposition party, said: "We are talking to each other for the first time." ... The parties have officially agreed to meet each other on a regular basis ... sensitive issues can be left to settle, politicians can ask each other about specific interests that motivate their various points of view, so that compromises can come within reach". A British diplomat, present at the ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on 5 February [2010] in Kampala, described it as "a breakthrough".

From Marcia Luyten's article 'Political parties in Uganda agree to dialogue', first published in NIMD Magazine 2010.



Image from the MoU signing ceremony in Kampala, February 2010.

Enhancing women's participation in politics

Exchange visit

Zambia, Uganda, Kenya & Burundi → Tanzania

Date

14-18 December 2009

Hosts

Tanzania Centre For Democracy,

Tanzania

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How did they do it?

The objective of this exchange visit was to share experiences on challenges for empowerment of women and to discuss strategies for enhancing the participation of women in politics and decision making. The exchange visit brought together twelve female, and four male, politicians from Zambia, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania.

The programme took place in Tanzania, as Tanzania is one of the few countries in Africa where women make up more than 30% of members in parliament. The participants in the programme were eager to find out how the Tanzanians were able to reach such high levels of female participation and whether the strategies to enhance women's involvement had any potential negative effects.

Comparing women's participation across Africa

The main component of the programme in Tanzania was a workshop with presentations from all countries on the challenges and strategies for enhancing women's participation in decision-making in the region. The participants identified and shared gender-responsive policies and actions important for enhancing women's ascendance to positions of leadership.

The delegates from Zambia, Burundi and Kenya described how the lack of affirmative action (in terms of an electoral quota system) negatively affected the position of women in their countries. The delegates from Uganda and Tanzania indicated that despite the existence of a framework for affirmative action in their own countries, there is still a significant gender imbalance.

The participants jointly identified factors constraining women including the lack of strong women's organisations and an activist approach to women's participation; the lack of financial, moral and political support for female candidates; and the lack of political will to undertake affirmative action, adopt special seats or introduce quota systems.

Besides the workshop, the delegates also met with political parties in Tanzania, and with women's organisations, in order to appreciate their policies and efforts. Through those meetings the delegates learned of opportunities for collaboration between political parties and civil society organisations.

The gender dimension of development

Through the workshop delegates grasped and appreciated the gender dimensions of development in the five countries. It made them realise that the challenges women face, cross national boundaries.

The delegates also identified various challenges and prospects for empowerment of women and took home concrete strategies for enhancing the situation of women in decision-making. Prominent among the

recommendations were the need to lobby for legal reforms to accommodate legislated affirmative action, training of women candidates, capacity building for political parties women's wings, and the introduction of special seats for women.

The women also decided to discuss specific policy options within their political parties, in order to come up with unique gender responsive policies for adoption by their own political parties. Finally, the delegates expressed the desire to form a Women's Forum in order to spearhead advocacy for administrative and policy changes.

"What was different here, and what was so beautiful, is that we didn't spend a lot of time in a room. The programme was made in such a way that we visited different kinds of organizations, and the political parties. This allowed us to learn on site."

A delegate from Uganda

"We have seen that it is very important to work together. We need to have a network of women, so that we can support each other".

A delegate from Burundi



Delegates discuss gender strategies during a break in the workshop held in Dar Es Salaam in December 2009.



Women delegates from Zambia, Uganda, Burundi and Kenya visit the headquarters of the Tanzanian political party CUF.



Women from a Tanzanian political party welcome delegates with a song.

Creating an independent electoral umpire

Exchange visit

Mali → Ghana

Date

14-18 February 2010

Hosts

Institute Of Economic Affairs (IEA),

Ghana

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Electoral reform in Mali

From 14-18 February 2010, ARP organised for a delegation of Malian politicians to meet with electoral stakeholders in Ghana, in order to deepen their understanding of Ghana's electoral management system.

In 2008, Mali initiated a three year reform process aimed at assessing and improving the functioning of its multi-party democracy. President Touré mandated a commission, led by former minister Daba Diawarra, to organise widespread consultations and formulate recommendations in this respect. Amongst the 233 proposals of the Expert Committee was the setting-up of a neutral electoral commission, based on the Ghanaian model.

The exchange to Ghana offered an opportunity for the Malian political parties and NIMD's partner in Mali, the *Centre Malien pour le Dialogue Inter-Partis et la Démocratie* (CMDID) to come up with recommendations for the set-up of this new electoral management body.

The delegation included Malian politicians, a representative of the commission of parliamentary laws, and a representative from civil society.

The Ghanaian model

In Ghana the unanimity of the political elite in viewing the Electoral Commission as independent, is based on its impartiality and on the successful settlement of various conflicts by the Ghanaian forum for political parties (GPPP).

The establishment of a permanent dialogue between political parties in Ghana has also helped to create a sound and tolerant political culture, in which the political elite has the ability to overcome the political divides to the benefit of their country and its development.

The Malians learned that there are benefits in having a single body to manage all aspects of elections, from the establishment of the electoral register to the declaration of the results. They also learned that the independence of an Electoral Management body can only be guaranteed if it is provided with sufficient human resources, as well as legal, material and financial means.

CMDID follow-up

As a follow-up to the exchange visit, CMDID published a booklet on the comparative advantages of the Ghanaian election management structure vis a vis the proposed structure in Mali. An interparty meeting was organised in Mali to discuss the proposed reforms to the election management structure and to formulate a list of recommendations. These recommendations were disseminated through newspapers and the national television.

Furthermore, CMDID organised a meeting in parliament to inform the members of parliament about the conclusions of the mission and the recommendations of the parties. The session was positively received.

The parliamentarians present during the parliamentary session have since asked CMDID to provide input when the proposed reforms of the election management structure in Mali are presented to parliament and discussed in parliamentary committee meetings.

Towards an independent electoral umpire for Mali

A member of the *Commite d'appui aux reformes institutionnelles* (CARI), responsible for translating the recommendations of Mali's Daba commission into bills, joined the exchange visit to Ghana. After the visit to Ghana and reading the comparative study on election management, published by CMDID, the CARI resolved to change its proposal on Malian election management. In the latest version of the texts proposed by the CARI the president would no longer appoint the chair of the Electoral Commission, and would instead be appointed by the other board members of the Electoral Commission. This would greatly enhance the independence of the Electoral Commission.



The Malian delegation visiting the Ghanaian Parliament.

Working together for constitutional reform

Exchange visit

Ghana, Zimbabwe, Zambia → Kenya

Date

3-8 May 2010

Hosts

Centre For Multiparty Democracy Kenya (CMD-K),
Kenya

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Constitutional reform in NIMD programme countries

Constitutional reform processes are now underway in a number of NIMD programme countries, including Malawi, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Mali and Ghana. In May 2010, NIMD partners involved in some of these national reform processes came together in Nairobi to reflect on their experiences so far.

The exchange visit - initiated by the IEA/Ghana Political Party Programme and hosted by CMD-Kenya - featured speeches and in-depth discussions on constitution making processes in Africa. The three co-chairs of the Zimbabwean Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform and one expert on the Zambian constitutional reform process also contributed to the exchange.

The peer-to-peer nature of the programme provided a unique opportunity for politicians and other NIMD partners from different African countries to compare the content, outcome and inclusivity of their respective constitutional review and reform processes. They challenged each other by posing the question: why is constitutional reform necessary and what can we learn from each other?

A democratic contest of ideas

Participants engaged in a series of debates on various topics including the use and usefulness of referendums as a means of ensuring that a nation's constitutional system derives its legitimacy through the people. Participants in fact had the chance to debate and exchange views on this subject with Kenya's Constitutional Committee of Experts.

Representatives of Zimbabwe's Parliamentary Select Committee on the country's new constitution illustrated the importance of a dialogue between citizens to constitutional design with experiences in ensuring inclusivity and public outreach in Zimbabwe. Their reflections were further enriched by similar examples from Zambia where public regional debates are used to create public awareness of the content and progress of the constitution process.

In addition to the group debates, participants held private meetings with Kenya's Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka and Prime Minister Raila Odinga. Other notable speakers featured during the programme included Dr. Patrick Lumumba, former secretary of the CKRC and now Director of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC), Professor Yash pal Ghai and Atsango Chesoni, Vice-Chair of Kenya's Committee of Experts (CoE).

Spotlight on Ghana

In January 2010, Ghana's Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) was put in place to consider some of the democratic loopholes in the current constitution, which has been in use for more than fifteen years. The exercise revolves around six principles which are expected to guide the Committee's work and lead towards a revised, commonly agreed new constitution in 2012.

The recent endorsement of these principles by all political parties is considered a huge plus and helps facilitate the CRC's work in Ghana. Following the exchange visit to Kenya, the Ghanaian political parties acknowledged this best practice and continued to build consensus on proposed amendments to the 1992 constitution. Their common position, as expressed in a joint communique, is another positive step towards a strong and vibrant democratic future for Africa.



Delegates meet with Kenya's Prime Minister, Raila Odinga.



A screenshot of some of the television coverage of Kenya's own constitutional reform process.



Image from a Kenyan newspaper article covering the exchange visit



Delegates disembark from their bus, heading for another meeting.

List of NIMD partners in Africa

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arp

- Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP)
- Centre for Interparty Dialogue and Democracy, Mali (CMDID)
- Centre for Multiparty Democracy, Malawi (CMD-M)
- Centre for Multiparty Democracy, Kenya (CMD-K)
- Institute of Economic Affairs, Ghana (IEA)
- Interparty Organisation for Dialogue, Uganda (IPOD)
- NIMD Country Office, Mozambique
- Tanzanian Centre for Democracy (TCD)
- Zambian Centre for Interparty Dialogue (ZCID)
- Zimbabwe Institute (ZI)

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A delegation of Ghanaian and Zimbabwean politicians visiting Kenya's constitutional court.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is a democracy assistance organisation formed in 2000 by seven political parties in the Netherlands in order to assist political parties in young democracies. NIMD currently works with more than 150 political parties in 16 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe.

NIMD's Africa Regional Programme (ARP) aims to stimulate interaction between political parties on the continent on themes which influence national democratic reform agendas. Over the past four years, through a series of peer exchange visits, African politicians have shared experiences and identified appropriate solutions to complex political challenges. This publication documents six exchange visits involving politicians from NIMD programme countries.