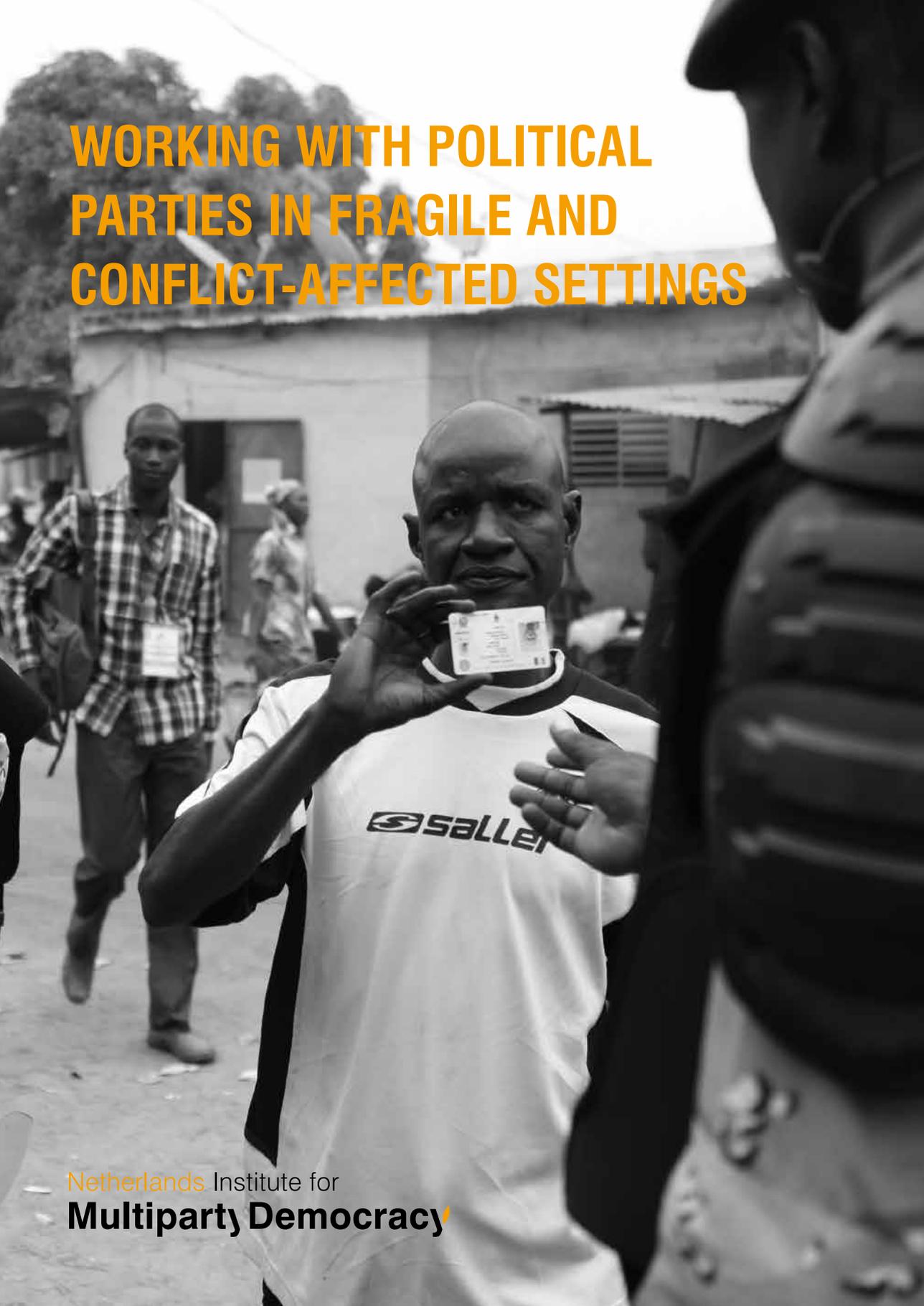


# WORKING WITH POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS



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# THE NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY (NIMD) IS A DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE ORGANIZATION THAT PROMOTES THE DEEPENING OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH INTERPARTY DIALOGUE AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OF POLITICAL PARTIES.

Based in the Netherlands, NIMD works with more than 200 political parties in over 20 countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Together with the political parties and its local partners, NIMD contributes to inclusive and transparent political systems in these countries.

Over the past fifteen years, NIMD has gained experience in assisting political parties in diverse settings around the globe. One specific context in which NIMD has increasingly been involved is that of fragile and conflict-affected settings: settings in which the political environment is extremely polarised and divided due to a lack of trust among political actors.

This lack of trust, together with the divisions between political groups that characterize such contexts, often has its origins in violent conflict. NIMD's strategies on political party dialogue and capacity building are highly valued in these settings, where the strengthening of political legitimacy is viewed as a pre-condition for sustainable peace, stability and development.

This brochure outlines the challenges and key lessons NIMD has learned from its experience in fragile and conflict-affected settings, as well as the main focus areas of NIMD's approach to party assistance in these settings over the coming years.



# DEFINING FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

Since its founding in 2000, NIMD has become increasingly involved in fragile and conflict-affected settings. NIMD's use of the word 'settings' indicates that fragile and conflict-affected contexts often coincide with state borders but may also pertain to specific areas within a state, or to regions encompassing the borders of several states. Such settings are characterized by two interconnected and mutually re-enforcing elements: fragility and conflict-affectedness.



## FRAGILITY

Fragility refers mainly to the weak capacities of the state. In post-conflict settings - or in some cases, after a period of authoritarian regime - government capacities and the state apparatus have been eroded and are extremely weak, causing people to become used to dealing with parallel, non-state forms of governance. Fragile settings are characterized by low social cohesion, and a lack of consensus on what organizing principles should determine the contest for state power and how that power should be implemented. Commonly, state institutions in fragile settings have low capacity or political will to fulfil their functions, a low degree of public legitimacy and high vulnerability to external political and economic forces. The weak capacities of fragile states contribute to instability and insecurity within these settings.

## CONFLICT-AFFECTEDNESS

Conflict-affectedness refers to settings with a history of violent conflict, often involving identity-related factors and grievances with strong historical roots. Sometimes this may reflect an actual, ongoing armed conflict, while in other instances the conflict has ended but its immediate effects are still widely present. Also, the effects of authoritarian and violent repressive regimes sometimes only become clear after the regime has been removed from power and power struggles between groups in society surface.

Social divisions within such settings are deep and histories of violence, exclusion and repression lead to a large sense of distrust between different groups in society. The state often does not have an effective monopoly on violence, because of the role of other armed actors. Furthermore, the danger of conflict re-emerging or becoming worse lingers as a distinct possibility in the minds of the inhabitants, impacting on social, political and economic behaviour.

# FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS ON THE GLOBAL AGENDA

States struggling to move beyond violent conflict and social upheaval continue to be a major cause for concern on the international policy agenda. A large amount of political attention, support and resources has been provided to these settings. The objective of this support is to enable them to steer away from conflict and uncertainty and to move towards a more peaceful trajectory based on political stability and development. This type of transition, which is essentially of a political nature, is reflected in the 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States which brought to the forefront a strong international push for a more political approach to peace, stability and development in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

## THE NEW DEAL FOR ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE STATES

In 2011 in Busan, South Korea, the members of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding - comprised of the g7+ group of 19 fragile and conflict-affected states, together with development partners and international organizations - developed and endorsed the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. Under the terms of the agreement, five peacebuilding and state-building goals were explicitly defined in order to support states in transition from fragile and conflict-affected settings, namely:

1. Legitimate politics
2. Security
3. Justice
4. Economic foundations
5. Revenues and services

## DEVELOPMENT OF CAPABLE AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES

The need to foster legitimate politics as a key peacebuilding and state-building goal is strongly emphasized in the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, the development of capable and democratic political parties needs to be a top priority for democratic development.

NIMD also believes that well-functioning political parties and strong interparty dialogue are crucial elements in strengthening democratic transition processes in post-conflict societies. Furthermore, political parties and dialogue can make significant contributions to efforts to reduce political violence and intimidation, and can help avoid both instability and any potential relapse into conflict.

NIMD actively supports political parties in a number of fragile and conflict-affected settings, facilitating inclusive political party dialogues and strengthening the capacity of these parties. In this way, NIMD significantly contributes to international peacebuilding and state-building goals, and brings a longer-term perspective to building democratic governance and inclusiveness in fragile contexts.

# FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS IN NIMD PROGRAMMES

## LEGEND

■ NIMD country programmes in fragile and conflict-affected settings

■ Other NIMD programme countries

### GUATEMALA

Although the 1996 peace accords initially paved the way for deepening democracy in Guatemala, recent developments - including the infiltration of criminal networks in politics - have translated into significant democratic setbacks, accompanied by repression and polarisation.

### MALI

In 2012, a military coup d'état resulted in a political crisis in Mali. Currently, violent conflict is ongoing in several regions of Mali, severely affecting the political system and the relationships between its political actors.

### SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

The post-Soviet states in the Southern Caucasus have faced similar as well as different challenges and obstacles in the process of democratization. Furthermore, the geopolitical situation in this region makes for a highly complex international environment, posing its own challenges towards peace, security and democracy.

### MYANMAR

After decades of authoritarian military regimes, Myanmar has embarked upon a transition towards a democratic regime. New political parties, as well as former military and armed ethnic movements, are seeking a place in the emerging democratic system, which is still hampered by distrust and limited democratic skills and capacities.

### HONDURAS

In Honduras, one of the most violent countries in the world, the political system is trying to recover from the backlash of the 2009 coup d'état, while suffering from the devastating effects of widespread crime and powerful drug syndicates.

### SOUTH SUDAN

After its independence in 2011, factional disputes led to the eruption of a civil war in 2013, undermining South Sudan's fledgling democratic political system.

### BURUNDI

Burundi has witnessed decades of violent civil conflict between ethnic groups. Despite the fact that a peace process has made democratic transition possible, strong political distrust and a lack of inclusive dialogue between different groups continue to pose significant challenges.

### COLOMBIA

The conflict between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has plagued Colombia for many years but has now led to a peace process. The inclusiveness of this process, and FARC's role in Colombia's political future, will be crucial to its success.

### ZIMBABWE

The contested 2008 presidential elections led to an upsurge in political violence and a five-year period of power-sharing between the main political parties. Since the 2013 elections, relations between the former liberation movement ZANU-PF and opposition parties have remained polarised.

### MOZAMBIQUE

A decade-long violent struggle between the ruling Frelimo regime and opposing Renamo movement in Mozambique eventually led to a peace accord in 1992. The legacy of war, including the strong political divisions between the two main parties, still plays a large role in Mozambican politics today.

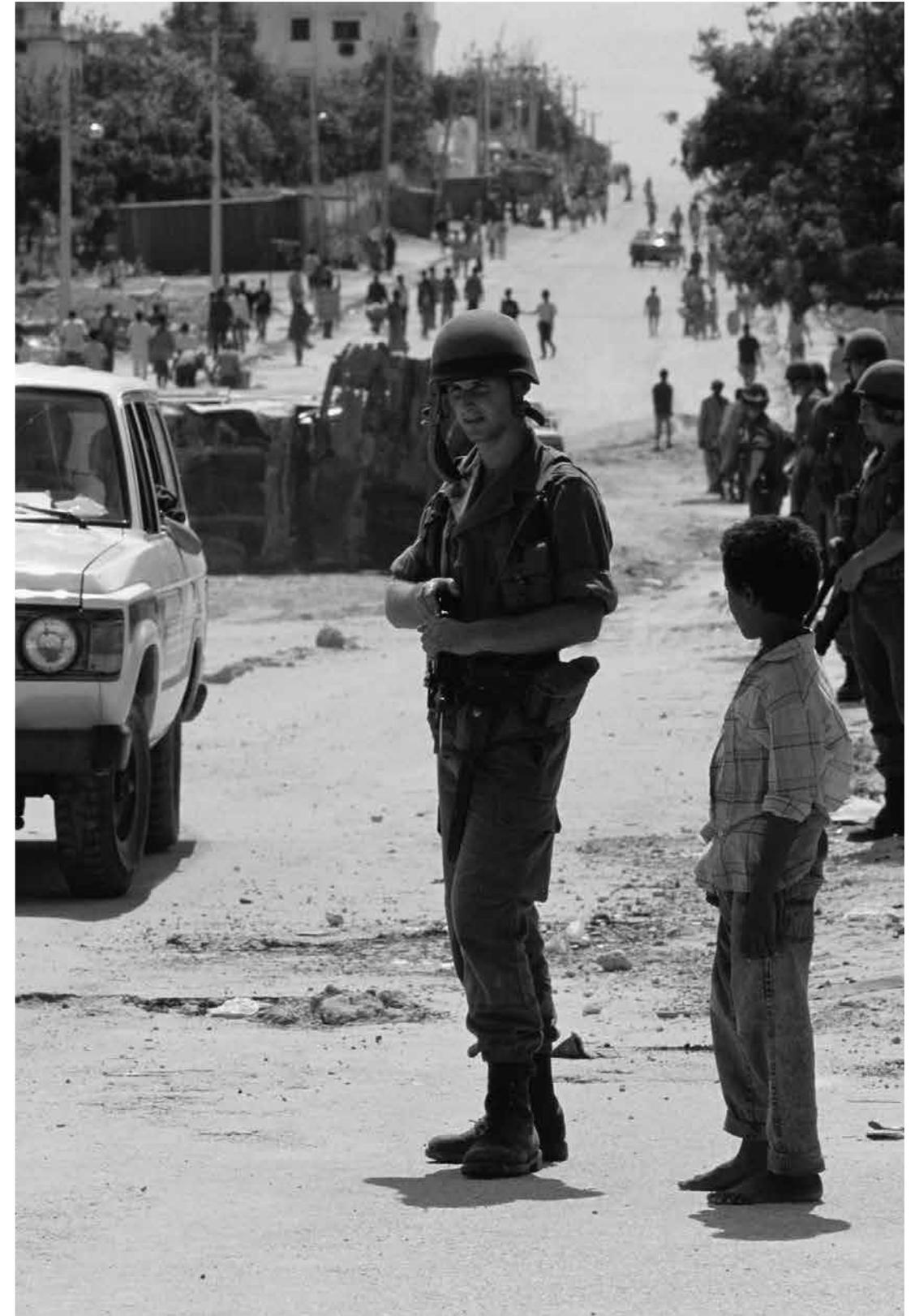
### KENYA

Although Kenya has not recently experienced civil war or an authoritarian regime, its electoral crisis in 2007 triggered widespread ethnic violence. In order to avoid such a crisis in the future, enhancing trust and inclusiveness within Kenya's political system is of vital importance.

# THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

Although 'fragile and conflict-affected settings' can be a generally applicable term, states with fragile institutions and states emerging from violent conflict cannot all be placed in the same basket. The situations in these states vary widely, depending on several factors, including the nature of the conflict, how it was fought and for how long; how it ended, including the terms of the peace settlement; the state of institutions and the economy; the political situation before the conflict; the available capacity and resources; and the state's location and geostrategic importance.

NIMD's experience in fragile and conflict-affected settings has, however, highlighted a number of recurring challenges that come with working in these settings.



## RECURRING CHALLENGES

### WEAK STATE INSTITUTIONS

Political, social and economic institutions in fragile and conflict-affected settings may be inexperienced, or weakened by violence and conflict. These institutions may be captured by elite groups, such as the military, for undemocratic aims. The structure and composition of these institutions are more often reflective of power-struggles among conflict opponents and individual roles and loyalties, rather than conducive to accountability and effective functioning. Power within these institutions is often highly personalised. A huge influx of aid from the international community may overwhelm weak state institutions and fuel corruption.

### THE PERSISTENCE OF VIOLENCE

In most transition contexts, violence does not simply subside: it ebbs and flows, emerging in new flashpoints or re-emerging in old ones. Violence easily becomes engrained in how societies deal with day-to-day conflicts, enabled and made easier by previous experience, and the continued presence of means of war (for example, armed groups or weapons). Instead of subsiding, conflict may take on new forms and erupt in new areas: regions or groups that were previously left out of the peace process may come to the fore and new issues may generate new conflict fault lines. Fragility may also provide space for a surge in transnational criminal violence. Because of these factors, security concerns remain at the forefront of people's minds even if war or dictatorship may formally have ended.

### THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS ON RELATIONS BETWEEN CITIZENS AND THE STATE

During violent conflicts, ordinary citizens turn to self-reliance rather than expecting support from the state. Citizens may also turn to alternative sources in their daily lives. In some contexts, cultural or religious networks may have played crucial roles in procuring safety and making survival possible. In others, armed groups may have built parallel governance structures that remain relevant even at war's end. These informal networks often overlap with state institutions, making for additional complexity in governance arrangements. As a result, relations between citizens and state are weak, or in some cases absent, and focusing on one's own group and identity becomes a matter of survival.

### THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

While international support may push for forward-looking reforms, political parties are often more concerned about the violent past and its continued effects. For them, dealing with the past and its aftermath, struggling for accountability and coming to terms with it, are dominant and important socio-political and psychological needs. The widespread presence of collective trauma can have a range of significant implications for democratization and state-building efforts including important peacebuilding processes such as transitional justice and reconciliation.

### THE USE OF WAR RHETORIC

Within fragile and conflict-affected settings, political and civic actors often mistrust each other. Rhetoric linked to warfare is commonly used when the stakes become high, fuelling polarisation. As violence often remains vivid in people's minds, memories of war or violence are manipulated to marginalize or intimidate people or groups, or to justify positions and policies. In a post-war context, war often continues in other ways and through other means, such as the political system.

### A LACK OF INCLUSIVENESS

A lack of inclusiveness is directly correlated with the terms of the social contract connecting state and society. Representational deficits as well as historical divisions hamper both the viability and the credibility of the social contract. Instead, the state is captured by certain groups, while others are structurally marginalized and underrepresented. While peace settlements are often intended to create the foundation for a more inclusive type of state, they are not always successful at doing so.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

Working with and externally supporting political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings requires understanding of the ways in which political parties function in these settings.

Although the characteristics of political parties vary widely, NIMD has identified some general characteristics of political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

### THE POLARISATION OF POLITICS

Politics in states emerging from armed violence or suppression is generally speaking highly polarised, characterized by a strong emphasis on the history of conflict, and a weak emphasis on content and policy. In these settings, the 'common good' has often been lost out of sight. This leads to a highly dismissive and often sterile debate between the 'ruling group' and the 'opposing group', with both groups focused on trying to delegitimize and exclude the other.

### PRECARIOUS PARTY FINANCING

Mainstream and public sources of funding are usually largely absent, especially for opposition parties. This means that political parties have little capacity to effectively organize themselves internally, campaign during elections, or fulfil law-making and oversight roles. Political parties' precarious financial position, in combination with a lack of effective accountability mechanisms, also makes them prone to engage in dubious arrangements with financiers that help undermine their democratic credibility.

### PRESENCE OF OR RELATIONSHIPS WITH (FORMER) ARMED GROUPS IN POLITICS

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, the social history of conflict is often extended by the presence of former military or armed groups entering the political mainstream as new political parties. Also, parties often retain the means to take up arms again through separate armed wings, youth wings, or clandestine shadow structures. Such political parties remain internally organized much like military organizations, with extremely hierarchical command-and-control structures and little space for internal democratic debate and decision-making. High-ranking former combatants usually retain key leadership positions and enjoy much political legitimacy stemming from their former role as fighters for a collective cause.

### CHALLENGES OF BEING A RULING PARTY

Ruling parties, be they former armed groups now newly accessing state power or longer standing political contenders, are faced with seemingly insurmountable political and societal challenges that are difficult for them to tackle in government. Initial euphoria over a political win can quickly turn into frustration and shame over not running affairs effectively, further extenuated by mounting criticism from civil society and international partners over lack of progress. From experience, members of ruling parties struggle to maintain an outward show and posturing of force, while feeling their own shortcomings strongly and lacking the space or confidence to reach out for help.

### DOMINATION OF ELITES

The political party landscape may be dominated by elites at the centre, excluding the vast majority of a country left untouched by government and disconnected from the political process for a long time. The problem of elite-capture of the political system is twofold. On the one hand, there is a strong disconnect between leaders and constituents, leading to weak representation and legitimacy. On the other hand, intra-elite tensions and fragmentation is common, which leads to different elite factions mainly occupying themselves with intra-elite competition, rather than seeking the deepening of consensus and a common agenda.

### LACK OF CAPACITY AMONG POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings are often either young and weak, or very hierarchical and centred around individual leaders. Politicians from fragile and conflict-affected countries often do not have a democratic tradition or training to fall back on and some might be unversed in basic notions of democracy, governance and democratic procedures.

# THE APPROACH OF NIMD

We work simultaneously with political systems, cultures and actors based on our guiding principles. The infographic shows how these levels are interrelated.

Fragile and conflict-affected settings are challenging environments for political parties to operate in. NIMD has identified a number of factors that affect its multilevel approach in these settings.

## AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES (SYSTEM LEVEL)

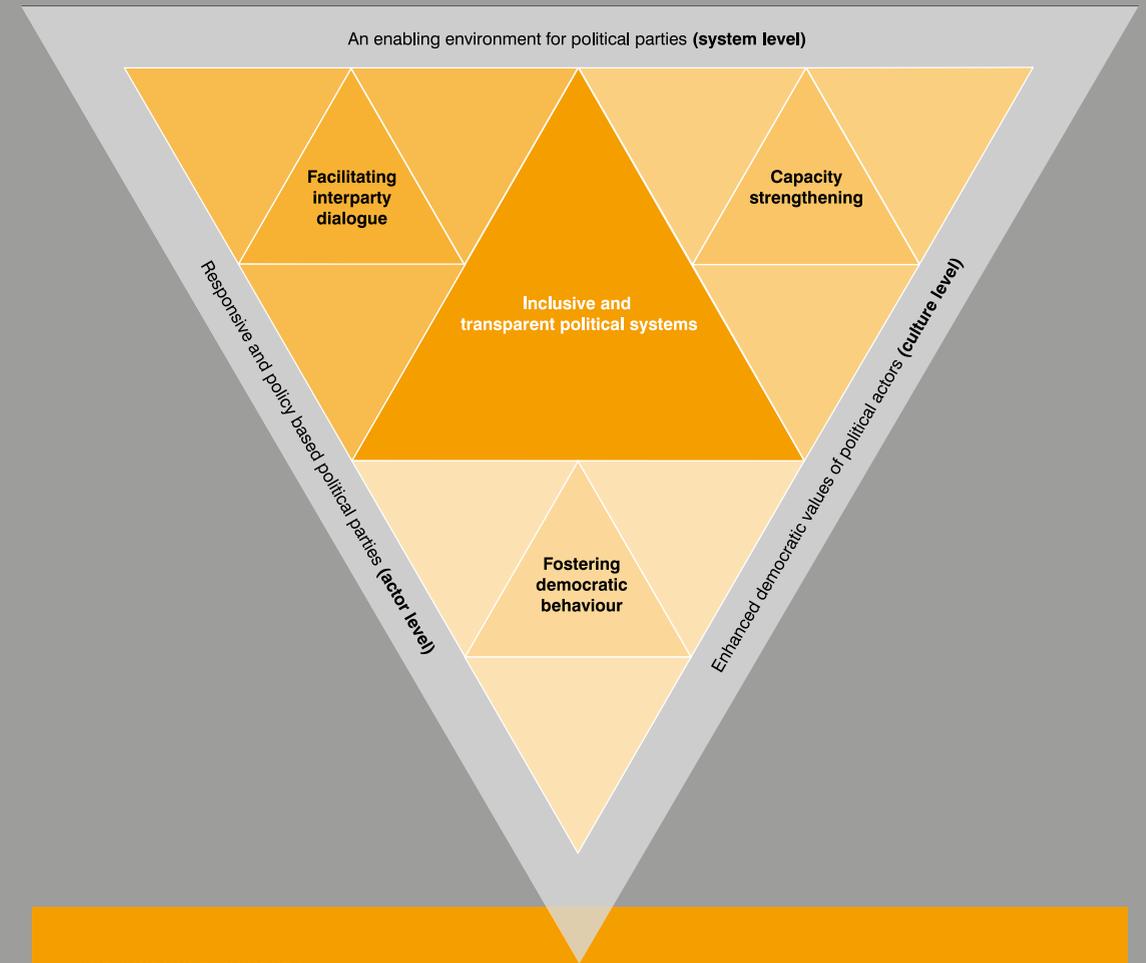
NIMD has identified the impact of political settlements (for example, peace agreements) on the political system as a key factor to take into account in its interventions. Additionally, the need to synchronise political party assistance interventions with international conflict-resolution and peace-building interventions is important.

## RESPONSIVE AND POLICY BASED POLITICAL PARTIES (ACTOR LEVEL)

Political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings often emerge from armed movements. Building the capacity of these actors to participate effectively in political processes is crucial. Furthermore, political processes are more vulnerable when they exclude important groups in society. Therefore, NIMD focuses on empowering marginalized groups towards inclusive participation in political processes.

## ENHANCED DEMOCRATIC VALUES OF POLITICAL ACTORS (CULTURE LEVEL)

The political culture in fragile and conflict-affected settings is highly polarised and complicates the trust building process between political rivals. In addition, the political system and values in these settings are more vulnerable to the impact of non-democratic practices such as the influence and impact of illicit networks on politics.



## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### IMPARTIALITY

Our approach is non-partisan. We are not affiliated with one specific political denomination and we work with all parties across the political spectrum.

### INCLUSIVENESS

We provide a platform for discussion for both ruling and opposition parties. All parties take part in the dialogue with an equal voice.

### DIVERSITY

We encourage the equal participation and representation of marginalized groups and empower representatives of these groups to take part in the policy-making process.

### LOCAL OWNERSHIP

We work on an equal basis with our local partners. Our programmes are locally set and reflect local demands.

### LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Political transformation, building trust and strengthening political parties takes time. Therefore, we invest in long-lasting relationships with the local partners and political parties.

# NIMD'S WORK IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

Based on its overall experience with political parties NIMD has identified six focus areas in fragile and conflict-affected settings:

1. Building trust between political rivals
2. Supporting the conversion of former armed movements into political parties
3. Fostering inclusive political settlements
4. Working in synchronicity with international conflict-resolution and peacebuilding interventions
5. Advancing women's political participation
6. Understanding the impact of illicit networks on politics in fragile and conflict-affected settings



# 1.

## BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN POLITICAL RIVALS

The development of democratic systems in settings where political distrust and polarisation persist, requires a modicum of trust between former enemies in order to make interparty cooperation viable. Supporting appropriate trust-building processes demands knowledge of the institutional context and the actors involved combined with tactful diplomacy and high-end mediation skills.

Based on its sound track record and multiple years of experience in facilitating interparty dialogue, NIMD and its network of international facilitation experts and trusted local partners facilitate dialogue and mediate between ruling and opposition parties and, through this process, invest in building political trust.

### CASE 1

#### BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN POLITICAL RIVALS IN MALI

In the aftermath of the 2012 coup d'état and the resulting political crisis in Mali, new political actors and coalitions emerged, including political parties, religious organizations, trade and workers' unions and other civil society organizations. NIMD has helped set up a broad, inclusive platform for these organizations to meet and discuss a 'road map' out of the crisis. Between 2012 and the first elections held in 2013, the platform organized three major meetings which eventually led to a joint position statement, enhancing dialogue and trust between key civil society actors and creating a common language for finding a way out of the conflict in Mali.

# 2.

## SUPPORTING THE CONVERSION OF FORMER ARMED MOVEMENTS INTO POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings often emerge from armed movements. Their reconversion process has a profound impact on their performance and attitude towards democratic politics. Parties converting from armed movements are shaped, in part, by the legacies of conflict and warfare. Programmes focused on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of members of armed movements further affect the socio-political dynamics of these organizations and their potential future roles in politics.

NIMD is a leading organization in political party capacity building. We work with all the main political parties in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Through long-term assistance, we are able to build the capacities of former armed movements and allow them to gain practical political skills and experience as political parties.

### CASE 2

#### SCHOOLS OF POLITICS IN MYANMAR

In Myanmar, NIMD has begun to set up a series of state- and regional-level Schools of Politics. The schools provide multiparty platforms in which parties engage and cooperate, but also serve as institutes to bring democratic skills and expertise to politicians from diverse political backgrounds. In a setting where political distrust between parties is high and political capacities are weak, the schools contribute to strengthening democratic capacities, helping parties in their conversion to genuine political parties. At the beginning of 2015, NIMD successfully completed its first School of Politics in the Tanintharyi region, and will expand into additional areas in 2015 and beyond.

### 3.

## FOSTERING INCLUSIVE POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS

Often, within fragile and conflict-affected settings, not all groups in society are represented appropriately in the political system and political rivals do not easily recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. Political settlements and peace agreements in these settings might have been effective in containing violence, but provide weak political foundations for the new post-war or post-authoritarian state. In addition, these settlements are often renegotiated in the post-conflict period. It is of key importance for ensuring sustainable peace and state building in fragile and conflict-affected setting to foster inclusiveness within these settlements. Political parties and their leaders have a role to play in enhancing the inclusiveness of their country's political system. This requires a gradual consensus-building process with a large degree of local ownership, often in combination with experienced external facilitation.

NIMD has gained valuable experience in working with political parties to increase inclusiveness in difficult contexts. NIMD recognizes the significance of political settlements in many fragile and conflict-affected settings as the key to inclusive political systems and as cornerstones of sustainable peace processes.

#### CASE 3

##### FOSTERING INCLUSIVE SETTLEMENTS IN BURUNDI

In 2000, after years of violent ethnic conflict, the Arusha peace accords laid the foundations for peace in Burundi. However, the main armed movements only joined the peace process after prolonged negotiations and separate ceasefire agreements in 2003 and 2008. Nevertheless, the principles contained in the Arusha peace accords have a profound impact on how the political system of Burundi functions. As competition for political power between the Burundian political parties remains fierce, and distrust and polarisation is high, key elements of the agreements are tested (for example, through constitutional law reforms). NIMD and its partner in Burundi, the Burundi Leadership Training Programme, actively invest in party capacity building and the facilitation of an inclusive interparty dialogue. This contributes to consensus on the functioning of the political system and fosters an inclusive democratic culture and practice.

### 4.

## WORKING IN SYNCHRONICITY WITH INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT-RESOLUTION AND PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTIONS

Issues related to fragile and conflict-affected settings remain high on the international policy agenda. International donors play a key role in financing and pushing forward a range of reform and state-building efforts, including programmes on topics like security sector reform; demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration; transitional justice; democratic institution building; and service delivery. These programmes imply different political trade-offs. Fragmentation among international interventions may easily nurture factional disputes. Therefore, it is important to pay significant attention to synchronising the agenda of the international donor community with political party support efforts and inclusive dialogue.

NIMD has built extensive networks with international and multilateral organizations in all of its programme countries. This provides an important basis for ensuring well-coordinated interventions on political party dialogue and capacity development that strengthen the broader peacebuilding and development agenda in different contexts.

#### CASE 4

##### WORKING WITH THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE) IN GEORGIA

In 2014, NIMD set up a joint project in Georgia in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The project focuses on conflict prevention in areas experiencing tensions between national minorities, and aims to contribute to a greater number of representatives of national minorities in leading positions of political parties and in the Georgian parliament. Through the project, NIMD and the OSCE create conditions and provide resources for multiparty dialogue, improve policy awareness within political parties, and develop effective, actionable intra-party plans to enhance national minority participation. By cooperating with the OSCE's agenda, NIMD contributes to the prevention of conflict and the enhancement of understanding among Georgia's national minorities.

## 5.

# ADVANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women suffer disproportionately from wartime violence. At the same time, women have made enormous contributions to peacebuilding and democratization in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Building on the international community's recognition of the important role of women as peace builders, it is important to include women's participation prominently in the support work for political parties in these settings. This requires significant efforts to protect women from violence and to ensure more influence of women on different peace and security issues.

NIMD has developed a specific toolkit to promote women's political participation. This is also applied in fragile and conflict-affected settings to promote their participation and ensure their effective influence on peace and security processes.



### CASE 5

#### ADVANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, NIMD has facilitated dialogue between political parties in order to educate politicians on the need for and use of national action plans (NAPs) to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. We have financed and facilitated the creation of NAPs in El Salvador, Colombia and Honduras. In addition, in 2015, NIMD formulated general recommendations for electoral bodies and political parties to guarantee the safety of female candidates, reduce systematic violence towards female politicians, candidates and activists, and facilitate women's access to political parties.

By signing The Dutch National Action Plan - an initiative of three Dutch government ministries, four research institutions, the Dutch Gender Platform (WO=MEN) and over 30 civil society organizations and women's groups to implement United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325 - NIMD has made a commitment to respecting women's rights; contributing to the equal participation of men and women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction; and supporting local women and their organizations.



## 6. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF ILLICIT NETWORKS ON POLITICS IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS

Criminal organizations increasingly seek active participation in and influence over local and national politics by bribing politicians and infiltrating political parties. This presents already-complex fragile and conflict-affected settings with a new challenge that, if not addressed, could undermine the precarious legitimacy of political parties. Criminal interests and illicit financing can easily further weaken the political system, hampering the development of accountability and civic participation.

NIMD, together with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and the Clingendael Institute, has developed an innovative study on illicit networks in politics in Latin America. Based on this work, and in order to contribute to adequate policy responses to this growing problem, NIMD is expanding and deepening its expertise on the impact of illicit networks on political processes in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

### CASE 6

#### UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF ILLICIT NETWORKS IN LATIN AMERICA

The issues of organized crime and its influence on politics in Latin America goes beyond the war on drugs: extortion, corruption and lack of clarity in decision-making procedures deriving from illicit networks in several Latin American states negatively impacts political systems. In order to strengthen institutions and re-install confidence, NIMD facilitates dialogue in several Latin American states on reform of electoral and political party legislation. In Guatemala, for example, political parties managed to reach consensus on transparency in political party financing and the provision of tools for the electoral tribunal to ensure adherence by the political parties to these rules. In Honduras, NIMD (together with NDI and UNDP) organized a series of thematic multiparty meetings, inviting experts from various Latin American countries who elaborated and eventually signed a Commitment for Minimum Guarantees for Ethical and Transparent Elections.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

International support for the development of political legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected settings is crucial, but it must also facilitate sustainable local ownership of the political processes. NIMD has developed significant experience with how to engage political parties in such settings, building on a growing network of local partners. Together, we invest in key processes like capacity building, trust building and consensus building.



Our organization has been able to invest in long term programmes and maintain long-lasting relationships with its partners thanks to the continuing support of donors such as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, the Open Society Foundation, the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

NIMD wants to further develop specific tools and deepen its skills and expertise to enhance its work in fragile and conflict-affected settings. We are keen to broaden our international network and develop partnerships with other expert organizations that can provide complementary expertise on key focus areas for political party assistance in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

We are always open to new partnerships, linkages and political networks. Please contact us if you would like to discuss and share experiences or explore possible future collaborations.

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**DEMOCRACY STARTS WITH DIALOGUE.**

