



Institutional Evaluation of the Netherlands
Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD)

Final Report
Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to this evaluation

- i. The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) was founded in 2000 by seven political parties represented in the Dutch Parliament. Its mandate is to support the process of democratisation in young and emerging democracies, with a specific focus on the institutional development of political parties and of pluralistic political systems.
- ii. In 2002, a four-year programme 2003-2006, entitled '*Without Democracy Nobody Fares Well*' was developed. Implementation of the programme has moved on at a rapid pace. IMD is currently involved in fifteen country programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with rapidly expanding portfolios of activities (also at regional level) and funding involved.
- iii. As a young organization, IMD has been concerned with learning through evaluations, turning them into a strong component of its institutional development strategy. The purpose of the current institutional evaluation is to "make a comprehensive external evaluation of the organization and the programme". The exercise is expected to provide insights in the overall quality of the IMD programmes and in the outcomes of the implementation of its first four-year programme. The evaluation therefore focuses on institutional and strategic issues, reviewing IMD's interventions at country and programme level. It was carried out using participatory methodologies, involving broad-based stakeholder consultations in the Netherlands as well as five country visits.

Understanding the IMD

- iv. The IMD operates as an actor in a relatively new and complex field. Its specificity lies in:
 - o a focused mandate, that is underpinned by a set of political values it seeks to promote (i.e. participation and inclusion) and embedded in a broader development agenda (i.e. the facilitation of democratic transition, sustainable poverty reduction, security and conflict prevention);
 - o the co-existence of three distinct yet potentially complementary identities (and related set of competencies) as a political actor; a development actor and an institutional development actor;
 - o its hybrid structure, characterized by a mix of professionals and party-political seconded staff.

Main findings

- v. The main findings of the evaluation process relate to six key evaluation questions: the relevance of the IMD mandate; the effective application of stated approaches and methodologies; the quality of programme execution; emerging patterns of impact achieved; the institutional capacity of IMD to deliver on its mandate; and the involvement and added-value of Dutch constituencies.
- vi. The mandate of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) is considered to be highly relevant and to add value by a large majority of actors in the field of democracy. Likewise, its interventions, which follow a two-track approach that links support to political parties with the promotion of multiparty dialogue and the development of democratic institutions, is perceived to be well-directed and justified.
- vii. The IMD stresses the importance of adopting approaches and methodologies that facilitate local ownership, genuine partnership relations and an empowerment of political parties. It also recognises the need for strategic alliances with other actors and agencies (national or external) so

as to consolidate and ensure the sustainability of its activities. Major efforts were made to apply these principles in programme countries. In the process, the IMD has been confronted with complex implementation challenges and dilemmas. In order to address these in a more structured and consistent way, the IMD is still to invest more time and resources into policy debate and strategic thinking for the purpose of developing a coherent set of country specific strategies, methodologies, tools and guidelines to systematically integrate the issue of sustainability throughout its operations.

viii. Important differences in implementation approach were observed. These are partly explained by the clear need for country differentiated approaches. Yet the considerable variations in programme design and management also seem to point at the existence of weaknesses in the implementation of IMD approaches and methodologies, as well as to weaknesses in the capacity available within IMD to implement programmes. So far, the IMD has primarily invested in the conceptual specification of its mandate and in financial/administrative aspects of project management, while less has been done to strengthen the IMD operational capacity to systematically and consistently implement its policies, approaches and instruments all along the programme cycle.

ix. Both the field visits and desk studies have resulted in substantial evidence that IMD programmes have yielded a wide range of (tangible and intangible) outcomes which contribute positively to the strengthening of political party institutions, as well as to promoting multiparty dialogue and interaction. Regional programmes are growing in importance and the IMD has also successfully invested at international/European level.

x. Different outcomes were observed in the countries visited. These reflect local realities, the stage of maturity of the processes as well as 'entry points' chosen by the IMD. Perceptions on the patterns of impact of IMD interventions tend to differ among stakeholders consulted. This underlines the need for IMD of having adequate systems for systematic performance-based monitoring and evaluation. It is too early to assess the contribution of IMD programmes to systemic changes in the overall democratic process and to broader development objectives. The findings also suggest that the IMD may not achieve a meaningful impact unless its activities are integrated into national development processes and linked to the work done by other actors. Time will show how IMD deals with this challenge.

xi. The IMD has invested considerable resources into the development of adequate systems for systematic performance-based reporting, monitoring and evaluation. A comprehensive online Programme Management System (PMS) was introduced, but needs to become better integrated with the practice of the organisation. The IMD has made a commendable shift from an expenditure-based to a more results oriented reporting mechanism, which links activities to policy outcomes. The evaluation team advises the IMD to review the purpose of collecting data, and to ensure that what it collects and measures is instrumental to ensuring accountability, organisational learning and long-term focused developmental practice.

xii. As a fast-growing organisation, IMD is confronted with the need to further invest in building its internal capacity. This may help to cope with increases in workload; the relatively high turnover of staff; the lack of content-related support and coaching for strategic thinking and reflection; and the fact that the growth in staff has stayed behind compared to the growth in country programmes and actual expenditure. IMD procedures are considered unclear by its beneficiaries, and delays in payments to political parties which may be attributed to capacity shortages on the side of the IMD compromise potential impact of planned interventions.

xiii. The support from the seven Dutch political parties to the IMD is currently evolving and reshaping itself. Accordingly with the changes in the IMD, there is a need to re-assess the role and added-value of Dutch constituencies at the three organisational levels (Board, Supervisory Council and PACOs).

Lessons learned and future orientations

xiv. Based on these findings, nine interrelated lessons emerged from this evaluation:

- The IMD approach to democracy assistance is innovative and could become a ‘bestseller’;
- Its ‘pioneering phase’ has been very effective;
- The time is ripe for more focus and consolidation;
- Look critically at what works and what doesn’t;
- Be proactive yet remain ideologically neutral;
- Intensify initiatives to become a learning organisation;
- Mainstream networking and strategic partnerships;
- Consolidate the use and impact of IMD’s unique selling point.

Strategic orientations

xv. It was stressed by several actors that the future development of the IMD needs to be primarily determined by results on the ground and Southern demand, rather than by Dutch political agendas. Strategic orientations should be informed by the fact that the IMD is ‘on track’ in the implementation of its four-year programme, during which it has showed to be able to deliver. Building on these premises, six strategic orientations were identified for the IMD to further mature in its institutional development:

- Temporarily limit growth in favour of institutional consolidation;
- Develop a solid policy framework and decision-making process to consider new demands;
- Adopt a more selective and strategic focus;
- Move from ‘pioneering’ to institutional maturity;
- Deepen the institutional knowledge base to deliver efficient, effective and result-oriented programmes;
- Understand what results are being achieved at different levels.

Institutional orientations

xvi. In the view of the evaluation team, the IMD will have to face three main institutional challenges during the coming years. These are (i) fine-tuning and strengthening the added value it derives from its unique hybrid structure; (ii) professionalisation; and (iii) internationalisation.

xvii. The combination of political and developmental agency in a hybrid structure sets the IMD apart from other actors in the field of democracy assistance, represents an essential component for translating its mandate into practice, and therefore constitutes a main ingredient of its added-value as a development institute. The hybrid structure may be further strengthened and fine-tuned by taking action in three complementary areas, which are (1) anchoring the integration of political and developmental professionalism in strong regional teams; (2) enhancing institutional conditions for learning and knowledge sharing within the organisation as a whole; and (3) balancing the mix of political and developmental professionals in the Board, Supervisory Council, management, regional teams and among IMD staff in general.

xviii. Given the first institutional challenge, the need to ‘professionalise’ requires further specification in the case of the IMD. Within the IMD, different professions need to be combined for achieving its mandate: politicians, development specialists, as well as institutional development specialists – all of which should be professionals. The IMD has made distinct progress over the last three years on monitoring, planning and evaluation; human resource

development, financial management, and keeping policies and implementation in line. There continues to be an institutional challenge for the IMD in the areas of

- Continued balancing and fine-tuning at each level of the organisation;
- Appointing professionals to each level of operations with a clear professional profile in line with the professional mix required;
- Challenging professionals not only on what they are good at and have been appointed to do but also on their capacity to learn from others;
- And ensuring continuity, institutional memory and learning.

xix. The IMD is under pressure to internationalise. Given the current phase of its institutional development, it may best respond to this challenge through intensifying its networking and partnership approach, rather than through seeking institutional transformation. Concretely this would mean:

- To continue investing in international networks and partnerships in support of its own programmes, joining up with partners who can play complementary roles, or take over certain programmes and activities from IMD.
- To continue networking in Europe, and establishing partnerships that may eventually lead to the establishment of IMD-like initiatives elsewhere in Europe, or in partnerships with others, to the establishment of an EU facility.
- To strengthen its role in providing policy and practical information to partners and stakeholders, and assisting in building a European platform of like-minded organisations.
- To gradually develop its capacity to lobby for more support to political parties and multi-party democracy in EC governance programmes.