Effective Party Assistance

Stronger Parties for Better Democracy

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PolicyPaper

November 2007

➤➤ *Political parties play a crucial role in modern representative democracy. Despite all their imperfections, the functions they perform cannot be taken on by any other entity. Party assistance needs to focus on the functions that parties fulfil in a democratic system rather than on unrealistic expectations of how parties should work.*

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What is International IDEA?
The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance—International IDEA—is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. Its objective is to strengthen democratic institutions and processes.

What does International IDEA do?
International IDEA acts as a catalyst for democracy building by providing knowledge resources and policy proposals and supporting democratic reforms in response to specific national requests.

Areas of work
IDEA's notable areas of expertise are:
• Constitution-building processes
• Electoral processes
• Political parties
• Democracy and gender
• Democracy assessments

Where does International IDEA work?
International IDEA works worldwide. It is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has offices in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Key Recommendations

1 Party assistance actors—donors, assistance providers and assistance partners—should agree on common principles for assistance project delivery. This would make projects more effective and less vulnerable to accusations of undue interference with other countries' democracies.

2 The assistance community needs to develop a tool-kit for needs assessment, monitoring of implementation and evaluation of projects.

3 Party assistance needs to focus on the functions that parties fulfil in a democratic system rather than on unrealistic expectations of how parties should work. These basic functions are: to develop consistent policies and government programmes; to pick up demands from society and bundle them; to recruit, select and train people for positions in the executive and legislature; and to oversee and control government.

4 The traditional field of actors in party assistance should be complemented by other actors, such as Party Internationals and regional cooperation forums.

5 Given that direct impact measurement is difficult in democracy assistance, indirect evaluation tools are needed, such as scenario development, state of democracy assessment and the balanced scorecard approach.

Executive Summary

Political parties play a crucial role in modern representative democracy. Despite all their imperfections, the functions they perform cannot be taken on by any other entity. The functions are: (1) to develop policies and programmes, (2) to pick up demands from society and bundle them into different options, (3) to recruit and select people for executive and legislative positions (and other positions in politics) and (4) to exercise control over government.

Party assistance as a field of international cooperation has existed since the 1950s and has been expanding steadily since, both in terms of money spent and the number of actors involved. Despite this long tradition, party assistance is still very weakly systematized and lacks coherent standards and principles with regard to what projects should achieve, how appropriate activities can be identified and how effects are to be measured.

The party assistance community should develop joint principles for project needs assessment, monitoring of implementation and impact evaluation. Such principles would make activities more effective and efficient. They would allow all actors, including assistance partners, to choose appropriate remedies for specific problems and they would also make party assistance less vulnerable to accusations of partisanship or undue foreign interference.

Instead of having unrealistic, normative ideas of how parties should work, their functions, as described above, should be at the centre of the new principles. The major obstacle to effective party assistance is the difficulty of linking activities directly to their ultimate goal of enhancing democracy. Indirect measurement tools are necessary to overcome this inherent weakness. Such tools can be scenario development and state of democracy assessment for needs assessment and the balanced scorecard approach for implementation monitoring and evaluation.

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Introduction

Purpose of this paper and overview

The purpose of the policy paper is to initiate a broad dialogue among party assistance stakeholders to discuss and to reach a common understanding of what effective and efficient party assistance entails. Ultimately, the goal is to lay the basis for establishing general principles for party assistance and to share best practices that will help stakeholders to design and implement effective assistance projects that are informed by context-specific needs assessments. In that sense, it is not an end in itself, but rather the start of an interactive process among stakeholders to make party assistance more effective and relevant.

We define party assistance as any type of international assistance geared towards individual parties or the party system as a whole, with the purpose of strengthening democracy in a given country. In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, we understand effective assistance in a broad sense that includes more than just the literal meaning of 'producing an effect'. Specifically, effective assistance encompasses targeting assistance to different contexts, defining clear aims and related indicators, harmonizing programmes to avoid duplication, and strenghtening transparency and accountability.

The paper aims to be both a policy paper and a discussion paper. It recommends and argues for the introduction of agreed principles, but it leaves the content of these principles open to further interactions with stakeholders and limits itself to some ideas as a basis for discussion. It explores the way international assistance to political parties is delivered and recommends ways in which assistance could be improved. The key goal is to make party assistance as effective and efficient as possible, meaning that it achieves the desired results with an optimal input of resources. The principles are not meant to be binding rules that determine every step, but to provide help and a reference point for stakeholders during the process.

Although party assistance is an important part of democracy assistance today, it lacks systematic information and analysis, which in turn can severely obstruct learning processes. Only recently have a number of studies been published that map assistance activities. Mostly, these analyses conclude that assistance providers still fail to carry out extensive assessments and evaluations. Assessment and evaluation are crucial not only for informing the design and implementation of programmes, but also for accountability to the public that funds the overwhelming majority of party assistance activities. Assistance partners in party assistance programmes would also benefit from more systematic information. It would enable them to identify the kind of assistance they need, which they could then actively seek rather then being subject to the agendas of donors or assistance providers. As is explained below, the interests of the assistance partners may not always be in line with the requirements of democracy as a whole, but at the same time, any assistance activity will be of very limited use if it does not meet a need of the assistance partner.

This policy paper is directed at staff from donor agencies and assistance providers who design assistance programmes or allocate funding. It is also directed at party assistance partners who want to know more about how to assess their own needs in order actively to seek the assistance they need.

The next two sections of this introduction describe the context and the problem; namely, why political parties are important for a functioning democracy, the roles they have

to fulfil and the problems or weaknesses they typically face in new democracies. The chapter entitled Analysis deals with party assistance, the types of activities, the actors and the way assistance is usually carried out. The chapter entitled Recommendations gives International IDEA's recommendations and serves as a basis for discussion of how to make party assistance more effective. The conclusion summarizes the main points of the other chapters.

The functions of parties in a democracy

There are four central functions of political parties in modern representative democracies:

1. To develop consistent policies and government programmes (the interest articulation function).
2. To pick up demands from society and bundle them (the interest aggregation function).
3. To recruit, select and train people for positions in government and the legislature.
4. To oversee and control government.

The first three functions feed into the two fundamental roles that political parties play in the political process: they form the government or they are in opposition. In practical terms, the significance of the functions varies according to the current role a party plays, as can be seen in Table 1. The fourth function varies depending on the type of political system. In parliamentary systems, where the government is elected by parliament and depends on its support, this function falls entirely on the opposition. In presidential systems, where the executive is independent, the legislature as a whole fulfils this function.

Table 1: Functions of political parties in government and opposition

	Articulation	Aggregation	Recruitment
Government	Implement policies	Sustain support for government	Fill government positions
Opposition	Develop alternatives	Gain support for change	Build pool of competent people

Much has been written about parties' obvious shortcomings, but no other actor could replace them. In some countries, politicians establish 'movements', which purportedly differ from parties by being unifying forces that represent the society as a whole rather than just a part of it. In most cases, however, the movement turns out to be just a replacement for the discredited term 'party'. Sometimes these movements try to follow through with their claim of being the sole representative of society and as a logical consequence deny all other parties the right of existence. 'Movements' that are set up to compete for power—as opposed to movements that advocate a specific cause, such as the civil rights movement in the United States—are either parties in disguise or potential threats to democracy.

Not so long ago many people—both practitioners and academics—believed that civil society could replace political parties. A vibrant civil society is a good thing for a country, but civic associations cannot play the role of parties unless they actually transform themselves into parties. It is the discredited state of many parties around the world today, not only in young democracies, that led to an exaggerated enthusiasm for civil society. Another reason is an alleged non-partisanship of civil society organizations. However, this is not true. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are important for democracy, but they are not by nature democratically

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mandated by anybody other than their members. What is more, they are part of the demand side of politics. Their demands have to be aggregated by an institution and this institution is the party system (Doherty 2001: 25–6). Parties are also important because they provide an institutional memory of policies and politics. This knowledge of what works and what does not is crucial to continuity. A political system that is characterized by individuals rather than by parties cannot provide this memory and also carries the danger of bureaucratic and technocratic dominance. In addition, parties aggregate policy options into bundles, as is described in Function 2 above.

The interests of a given party, its leaders and members, are not necessarily the same as the functions which the party should fulfil in order to sustain a working democracy. Most scholars agree that parties can have a number of goals. These goals are to maximize their vote-share, to obtain as many government offices as possible and to push a specific policy agenda (Harmel and Janda 1994: 265–71). While the goals are linked, there still is considerable difference between them. For example, maximizing vote-share does not necessarily lead to an increased number of government offices. In countries with frequent coalition governments it may be more important for a party to position itself as a possible partner of another party than to win as many votes as possible. Similarly, if a party has a strong ideological agenda it may seem natural for it to try to become big and powerful enough to be able to pursue its agenda. However, some parties deliberately choose to lose votes rather than compromise on their agenda.

The functions of parties in a democratic system and the goals of individual parties overlap, but are not necessarily the same. Party assistance has to bear in mind the relationship between the overall function of democratic parties and the goals of individual parties. The objective of party assistance is to enhance democracy. In order to be effective and to be accepted by the assistance partners, it has to benefit all the party's goals at the same time.

How do parties operate in reality?

To assess the current situation of political parties and to understand their weaknesses and needs, International IDEA carried out an extensive *Research and Dialogue* programme between 2004 and 2007. More than 300 parties in 50 countries were included in the project. Three comparative regional reports (Salih and Nordlund 2007; Stojarová et al. 2007; Suri 2007), two sub-regional reports (Chege 2007; Matlosa 2007) and 17 country reports have been published so far; one more regional report will follow in early 2008 (Adejumobi 2008). In addition, the information gathered is stored in an online database that International IDEA makes available on an individual basis to interested organizations and academics.[1] A recent International IDEA publication (Roncagliolo and Meléndez 2007) provides in-depth analysis of parties and party systems in the Andean region.

While it is not the purpose of this policy paper to summarize all the results from this large endeavour, it is important to highlight some of the key findings. Most importantly, there is no uniform picture that can be painted. The state of party systems in young democracies varies considerably from country

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1 See http://www.political-parties.org

to country and usually not all parties share the same weaknesses within a country. On the one hand, extreme volatility—changes in vote shares from one election to another—is a major problem in many young democracies. In essence this means that parties are incapable of developing stable relationships with society. On the other hand, some countries, mainly in Africa, experience very low volatility to the extent that one party dominates the political process over a very long time without any realistic chance of the opposition gaining power.

In Africa, party programmes seem increasingly detached from citizens' concerns and seem to lack creative, context-specific answers to the countries' problems. This failure, in turn, creates voter apathy and low turnouts in some areas of the continent. In terms of the structure of the party system, we observe two contradictory trends in Africa. There is an increasing fragmentation in many countries, while in others two-party systems or dominant party systems consolidate. International IDEA's research has identified two main challenges to political parties in Africa. One is the area of party financing. Corruption within parties is widespread and it is hard to imagine how these parties are supposed to be the foundation of stable, responsible governments. Therefore, in order to achieve good governance at the state level, the area of party financing needs to be tackled. The other area is the problem of leadership succession within African parties, which can often lead to severe crises.

In South Asia, International IDEA's research shows that the spread of democracy has surprisingly gone hand in hand with more authoritarian parties where the influence of leaders rises. Furthermore, while people's expectations of political parties grow, the parties' ability to deliver remains low. This creates a situation in which people are supportive of democracy as a whole but far less enthusiastic about political parties.

In Central and Eastern Europe, limited institutionalization is one of the main problems with political parties. Parties are not sufficiently rooted in society, resulting in relatively high levels of volatility as voters switch parties between elections or parties switch their ideologies.

In many countries, parties tend to be weakly organized, lack a coherent ideological platform and be set up around personalities rather than stable structures. As a consequence, new parties appear constantly, others disappear and there is a great deal of change both in political personnel and in political positions. In Latin America there has recently been a rise of (neo-) populist politicians who openly voice their contempt for the institutions of representative democracy. Research confirms that the dissatisfaction of the population with political parties increases the chances of newcomers outside the established parties winning elections. In the last five presidential elections in each of the five Andean countries[2], almost half the votes went to independents or to candidates who ran for newly formed parties (Mainwaring et al. 2006: 22).

To sum up, parties can have two fundamental weaknesses. One is a lack of organizational coherence and institutionalization, the other is a lack of programmatic substance. If parties fail to perform in both areas, they will not be able to get much traction. However, there are also cases where parties are weak in one aspect, but strong in another. In terms of democratic consolidation, this can be problematic when pro-democratic parties are strong on programmatic issues and weak on organization, while other, formerly authoritarian

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2 **Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.**

Analysis

parties lack a programmatic platform but act in a very organized way. As a consequence, the party system may be unresponsive to society's preferences (Carey and Reynolds 2007).

Most research on the state of party systems in newly democratized countries, including International IDEA's Research and Dialogue programme, presents a great variety of situations. A careful, context-sensitive analysis is crucial for any kind of party assistance activity.

Despite the different situations, the research nevertheless shows that political parties are part of the problem in most countries where democracy is perceived by the population not to be working satisfactorily. This is not surprising given the central role played by parties in the democratic process and it emphasizes that party assistance must be a central field of democracy assistance.

Unsatisfactory performance by political parties is not only a problem that affects newly democratized countries. In most established democracies political parties and politicians are held in very low esteem by their citizens and most parties do not fully comply with the idealistic model that is often used to assess parties in young democracies. In other words, few parties in Western countries are completely transparent, internally democratic and centred around issues rather than persons.

While it is important for the proper functioning of democracy to pinpoint crucial weaknesses of political parties in young democracies and to find ways to overcome them, it is equally important not to fall for idealistic expectations. Often, these are ideal types: they may serve as a beacon, as something to orient oneself by, but not as a model that one is likely to adopt fully. ■

This chapter analyses party assistance. The first section deals with the different actors in the field, and the second section analyses the different types of programmes and activities that are carried out as party assistance. The last section in this chapter discusses how needs assessments are carried out and how activities are evaluated.

There are very few studies, either academic or non-academic, on party assistance, let alone comparative analyses. Burnell (2000) deals with democracy assistance in general. Carothers (2006) is the first comprehensive, comparative analysis exclusively dedicated to party assistance. Burnell (2006) also deals with party assistance together with an analysis of party systems in different regions and countries and a recent book by Burnell (2007)—published by International IDEA and Sida—assesses how democracy support is evaluated. In addition, there are some studies that map party assistance activities in a certain region, such as a report commissioned by the Olof Palme International Center on democracy assistance activities in the Balkans and the Black Sea region (Erhardy 2006) and a mapping exercise by International IDEA in Central America (Umaña Cerna 2007). Although these studies vary in focus and depth, the conclusions they come to are remarkably similar. Party assistance generally lacks precisely defined objectives, high quality project management and proper measurement.

Actors in party assistance

Party assistance is a field with many different actors. The first basic distinction when talking about actors in party assistance is among those who receive the assistance (assistance partners), those who deliver it and those who fund it. Sometimes two of these categories fall together, such as when an implementing organization also provides the funds. Each of these groups has different interests and follows a different approach when deciding where and how to proceed.

Primary partners in assistance programmes are, of course, political parties. However, the exact target within parties can vary greatly. Programmes can be geared towards party officials, leaders, the youth, etc. In addition, activities can deal with only one party or with a number of them, for example when the aim is to foster dialogue and understanding. Depending on the objective of an activity, assistance partners can also be civil society actors, the

media, government officials and electoral management bodies (EMBs).

As can be seen from Figure 1, providers are usually the link between donors and assistance partners. Direct donor–to–assistance partner contacts are far less frequent.

Assistance providers

There are four types of assistance providers: partisan NGOs, multi-partisan NGOs, non-partisan NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. 'NGO' is used in a broad sense here and includes all not strictly governmental organizations. Most of these NGOs, however, receive all or almost all of their funding directly from public sources. The distinction between 'partisan', 'non-partisan' and 'multi-partisan' is blurred as some organizations engage in different types of activities, some of which may be partisan while others are multi-partisan. The German political foundations attach great importance to the fact that they are not party foundations, but only 'party-related'.

Even openly partisan organizations often have multi-party projects. There are a number of reasons for this. Some types of activity, such as dialogue programmes, obviously do not make sense on an individual fraternal party basis. In many countries the European party foundations cannot find appropriate counterparts, because parties align along different cleavages and not in the clusters of the Western party families.

The actors with the longest experience in party assistance are party foundations that operate mainly on a fraternal basis, meaning that they support their counterparts in other countries. The German party foundations were the first to enter the scene of party assistance. The two biggest, the Social

Figure 1: Actors in party assistance

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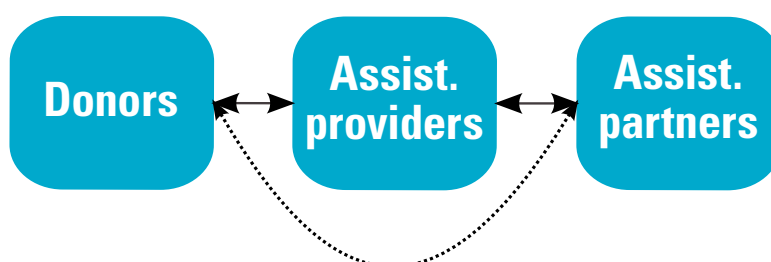
Democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and the Christian Democratic Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), started working with political parties in the 1950s. Today, they have an annual budget of more than EUR 100 million. It should be noted, however, that not all of this is allocated to party assistance. The German foundations, like most other European party foundations, have a broad mandate. They work both within their country and abroad on a wide range of topics from democracy promotion to participation and policy development. The amount of money they receive from the government depends on the size of their parliamentary representation. FES and KAS currently receive about one-third of the total amount each and the rest is split among the other four foundations (Erdmann 2006: 183). Funds are made available upon application to the Ministry for Development Cooperation.

Van Wersch and de Zeeuw (2005) count 32 European foundations active in party assistance, which are all affiliated with, or close to, a political party. The only exception in this group is the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), which is multi-partisan. Most of these foundations are very small in terms of their budget. Only one in four has a budget of more than

EUR 10 million per year and half have a budget of less than EUR 1 million (van Wersch and de Zeeuw 2005: 10–12). Given the broad range of activities, only a fraction of theseresources goes to party assistance. Most donors and assistance providers do not disclose how much they spend specifically on party assistance, so resources spent on these activities can only be estimated.

The German foundations dominate the field, as they account for roughly 90 percent of the overall budget of party foundations in Europe. The only other foundations that match this size are the two United States foundations, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). Both these were established in 1983 and they are loosely affiliated with the Democratic and the Republican parties, respectively. In contrast to the European foundations they work exclusively abroad and focus on democracy promotion. In 2005 the annual budget of the NDI was EUR 77 million and the annual budget of the IRI was EUR 57 million (Carothers 2006: 79). Although the US foundations can certainly be described as partisan by International IDEA's definition, their approach has always been more multi-party than that of most European foundations. Most other party foundations are rather small. The only ones with annual budgets for party assistance of more than EUR 1 million are the Swedish Social Democratic Olof Palme International Center (OPIC) and the Spanish Socialist Pablo Iglesias Foundation (FPI).

Estimates of how much of their budgets the foundations spend on party assistance activities can be found in Table 2. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain. Many programmes serve more than one purpose and the organizations do not always publish detailed budget breakdowns. Carothers (2006: 85) estimates that the German foundations spent somewhere between EUR 30 million and EUR 60 million in 2004 on party assistance activities. The considerably higher percentages for party assistance activities that are shown for the NDI and IRI compared to the German foundations are partly owing to the fact that the latter are engaged in a wide range of domestic political activities. Expenditure on these activities is included in the overall budgets.

Non-partisan NGOs in the field of party assistance are relatively new. The NIMD was founded in 2000 and now has an annual budget of slightly less than EUR 7 million. The Norwegian Centre for Democracy Support was founded in 2002 and Demo Finland in 2006. These three organizations have in common the fact that they bundle the democracy promotion activities of the

Table 2: Expenditure on party assistance

Organization	Overall budget in EUR	Party assistance in EUR	Share of total budget
NDI	77,000,000	26,950,000	35%
FES	123,500,000	24,700,000	20%
IRI	57,000,000	24,510,000	43%
KAS	102,900,000	20,580,000	20%
HSS	42,700,000	8,540,000	20%
FNSt	40,000,000	8,000,000	20%
HBS	37,200,000	7,440,000	20%
NIMD	6,800,000	6,120,000	90%
WFD	6,200,000	4,030,000	65%
OPIC	12,500,000	3,750,000	30%
RLS	9,000,000	1,800,000	20%
IDEA	11,000,000	1,650,000	15%
FPI	2,300,000	1,150,000	50%
Total	528,100,000	139,220,000	n.a.

Source: van Wersch and de Zeeuw (2005), Carothers (2006), International IDEA. Estimations for FES, FNSt, RLS and HSS based on data from KAS and HBS. All data are from 2004, except IRI and NDI (2005) and International IDEA (2006)

major political parties in their countries. The UK-based Westminster Foundation for Democracy, created in 1992, also belongs to the group of multi-partisan NGOs, although it funds activities that are run by the political parties or by other non-profit organizations rather than implementing projects itself. It could therefore also be characterized as a specialized donor organization.

In Australia, democracy promotion is carried out by the non-partisan Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI), which was founded in 1998 and receives most of its budget from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Recently, the two main Australian parties—the Australian Liberal Party and the Australian Labor Party—have established their own international programmes that are funded directly by the government, currently with AUD 1 million (EUR 590,000) each per year, under the Australian Political Parties for Democracy Program.

Finally, there are a number of international organizations working in the field. International IDEA is the only one with an exclusive mandate for democracy promotion. It was founded in 1995 and currently has 25 member states. Its annual budget is around EUR 11 million (2006), of which some 15 percent is spent on party-related activities, ranging from direct work with parties in the field to the generation and dissemination of comparative knowledge. Other international organizations engage in party assistance as one aspect of their activities, among them the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Donors

The largest proportion of financial resources for party assistance activities—as is the case for democracy assistance in general—comes from public sources. Funds are provided either directly by governments through their foreign ministries or development ministries, or through donor agencies.

The NDI and the IRI were established with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which still continues to provide about 10 percent of the organizations' budgets as a core allocation. The rest of their resources now come from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States State Department and a number of foreign donor agencies. Sweden grants money to the party foundations through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The German foundations also receive most of their funds from the state. The FES reported 91 and 92 percent of its proceeds came from public sources in 2004 and 2005, respectively. The second biggest foundation, the KAS, reported a share of 94 percent for 2004 (figures calculated from the foundations' statements of accounts). Other development agencies that fund party assistance projects are the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI), the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In addition to national governments there are some international or regional donors that have started to finance party assistance projects, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). It is therefore important to note that even the non-governmental actors depend almost exclusively on public funding.

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Other actors

Party Internationals, the loose associations of like-minded political parties, are also actors in the field. They do not usually carry out fully fledged programmes themselves, but instead work as an occasional catalyst or organizer of conferences and dialogues.

Types of party assistance programmes

Generally, party assistance attempts to strengthen either an individual party or the party system as a whole. Often, assistance is driven by an idealistic notion of what parties should look like, without much reference to how they work even in established democracies. As Thomas Carothers puts it, 'party aid seeks to help build parties that are competently managed, internally democratic, well-rooted in society, law-abiding, financially transparent and adequately funded, ideologically defined, inclusive of women and youth, effective at campaigning and capable of governing effectively' (Carothers 2006: 97).

Two dimensions describe the different party assistance activities: the target area and the form of delivery. This results in a two-dimensional space within which to map party assistance activities with five target areas (shown horizontally in Table 3) and five methods of delivery (shown vertically). It is not always possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the fields, but it gives a fairly good approximation of where a specific activity is located.

Target areas

A large part of party assistance is aimed at helping parties to become effective by enhancing *internal party organization*. During pre-election periods this essentially means help with campaigning. This can easily be carried out by specialist consultants who cover specific aspects of a campaign, such as strategy development, messages, voter targeting, advertising and get-out-the-vote activities. Although campaigning is very political and sensitive, the technical nature of the activities involved and the clearly defined time-frame and objectives make campaign assistance straightforward to implement. Campaign assistance is mostly done by partisan organizations because it is not something that can easily be shared with competing parties, apart from very general introductory training sessions on campaign communications. This type of assistance comes down in the end to paying for a professional service that the party could also buy itself, provided that it has enough resources.

Organizational assistance also covers

Table 3: Matrix of party assistance target areas and methods of delivery

Target area / Method of delivery	Internal party organization	Inter-party relations	Parties and society	Party regulation	International party assistance
Training/capacity building					
Dialogues					
Knowledge resources					
Policy advice/Consulting					
Direct financial contributions					

other aspects of the internal functioning of political parties. Among these are: (a) efficient internal communications, (b) accounting, (c) fundraising, (d) establishing a working structure for the party, (e) dealing with the media and (e) membership recruitment and membership relations.

A slightly different, albeit important, assistance activity is to help parties develop coherent policies. Given the frequent lack of sound programmatic platforms that can be observed in many parties in young democracies and the severe consequences this has once the parties are in government, the field of policy development has been given too little attention in the past.[3]

Especially in conflict-prone societies, building stable *inter-party relations* plays an important role in party assistance. It is based on the assumption that democracy can only work properly if parties engage in a healthy competition for ideas and policies while at the same time maintaining a minimum level of consensus. This has been described as diffuse support for democracy (Easton 1956). One aspect is that political competitors should still be able to talk to each other in a civilized manner no matter how fierce the dispute is. A slightly different area of inter-party relations is contacts made between parties in the target country and those in established democracies, usually in the home country of the assistance provider or the donor. Here, of course, conflict resolution is not the intention but rather learning by exposure. It is often argued that while the representatives of the target countries learn how democracy works in reality, their counterparts also gain a broader understanding of the situation and the difficulties faced by parties in young democracies. In addition, assistance providers increasingly try to foster 'South-South' relationships between developing countries. Rather than bringing together party people from developing countries with party people from a Western country with completely different backgrounds, South-South exchange facilitates the sharing of experiences among people who have recently gone through similar experiences.

Parties and society includes all activities that aim to increase the participation of women, youth and minorities in and through political parties. These projects have become much more frequent in the last two decades.

A special kind of assistance is geared towards the party system as a whole rather than towards individual parties. Assistance with *party regulation* tries to create a favourable framework within which parties can work. Party registration, compliance requirements and party financing form part of this. International organizations such as International IDEA and UNDP have taken the lead in this subfield.

The last area is the meta-level of *international party assistance*. This policy paper is an example of an activity in this area. It deals with how international party assistance is planned and delivered and the aims it tries to achieve.

In reality, many activities fall into more than one category. For example, a training course for members of different parties can simultaneously foster the internal organizational capacities of the parties and help inter-party dialogue. The same holds true for many projects geared towards women in politics. Assisting a women's platform can both help to bring more women into parties and create a forum for inter-party dialogue.

How assistance is delivered

Assistance can be delivered in many different ways. There are some common ways in

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3 International IDEA has been very successful in Latin America in facilitating platforms where party representatives meet both jointly and individually with experts on specific topics. This is a field where party assistance providers can establish crucial links between parties and external policy experts.

which it is organized: training sessions, conferences and seminars, exchanges, individual consulting and direct or in-kind grants. Again, as with the overall budgets for party assistance, it is difficult to estimate the importance of each of these methods. Van Wersch and de Zeeuw (2005: 17) report that the European party foundations spend 56 percent of their overall democracy assistance budget on training, 14 percent on advice and technical assistance and 12 percent on conferences and seminars. It is likely that the distribution for party assistance is similar.

Training and capacity-building thus seem to be the most important methods used, but the range of topics and the format can vary considerably. Most training deals with rather technical aspects of assistance, such as fundraising, campaigning methods or leadership development. Often, training is provided by international consultants who are expensive and lack knowledge of specific contexts. On the other hand, local expertise is not always available.

Workshops and seminars can also include consultants and other experts, but are geared more towards exchange of ideas and experiences. This is the field of dialogues. For example, politicians from other countries that have experienced similar problems can be invited to share their experiences. Workshops are also used to bring together politicians from different parties to discuss topics of general interest to them, such as codes of conduct or regulatory issues.

Study tours and exchange visits are a popular dialogue tool. Either a delegation of politicians from an established democracy visits an assistance partner country or a group from a newly democratized country travels abroad to get to know an established democracy. Assistance providers try to bring together groups of politicians—often taking them out of the country—in an attempt to initiate dialogue.

Organizations such as International IDEA produce a broad range of *knowledge resources* and analyses on party-related issues that may be freely used by assistance partners. International IDEA's handbooks, briefings, databases and interactive online platforms are geared towards practitioners and bring cutting-edge research to a useable and understandable format. This is important because there is often a considerable lack of knowledge about the subject on the side of both assistance providers and assistance partners.

Assistance can also be delivered as *policy advice* and individual *consulting.* Partners in this kind of assistance may be government agencies or party leaderships, who, for example, request the expertise of an assistance provider on a specific topic. Assistance providers can also try to influence the agenda by preparing policy papers and highlighting specific options.

Finally, *direct financial contributions* are rare in party assistance. NIMD has provided them on some occasions (Carothers 2006: 114), but generally assistance providers prefer to organize their own activities. In some cases they may also underwrite costs for specific events organized by parties themselves, such as conventions.

In addition to distinguishing the type of activity it is also important to look at the duration of the assistance. The German party foundations, for example, tend to have field offices in most countries in which they work and usually establish long-term relationships with their counterparts in these countries. Some of these programmes run for decades. Other assistance providers run specific

programmes over a limited time. The last distinctive criterion is the level at which the activity is located. It can be at the field level in a single country, at a regional level or at the international level.

Strengths and weaknesses of today's party assistance

Party assistance has two weaknesses that may sound contradictory at first: it lacks systematic methodology and it is insufficiently contextualized. The first weakness means that there is no general framework for what party assistance is supposed to achieve and how programmes should be implemented. This does not mean that there are no successful programmes. At the general level, however, no such framework exists. The second weakness refers to the fact that assistance providers tend to apply the same solutions everywhere or to copy experiences from other countries. Yet each situation is different, and if assistance is to be effective, it has to be tailored to specific contexts. Parties operate in a complex environment that is influenced by political, societal, cultural and historical factors. These factors need to be taken into account and a general framework would assist such a process.

Kumar (2005: 507) writes, 'the international community rarely had a coherent and comprehensive strategy for party development in a country. Instead, its approach has been opportunistic. Interested donors and NGOs have selected specific areas of assistance largely on the basis of local openings, available resources and their own interests.' Erdmann (2006: 197–9) analyses the party assistance activities of the German foundations and concludes that none of them has an explicit strategy that deals with the aims of party assistance and that they lack any kind of guidelines, tool-kits or handbooks on how to carry out party assistance projects.

Evaluation of party assistance activities is still very weak. Many assistance providers do make some kind of evaluation, but generally it is not systematic. It tends to be carried out by internal staff and not shared with anybody outside the institution itself (van Wersch and de Zeeuw 2005: 22–4). The lack of consistent, standard-based assessment and evaluation makes it difficult to determine the impact of party assistance and to improve performance. In addition, there seems to be little institutional memory of tools and experiences, which requires programme designers to start from scratch every time a new activity is designed.

The NDI has published a guide to party assistance (NDI 2001) that highlights some key elements in planning and evaluating party assistance programmes. It rightly points out that any needs assessment has to be done jointly with the partners in the assistance programme. Regarding indicators for evaluation the guide focuses on training sessions and recommends surveying participants. This is a step in the right direction, but it needs to be much more comprehensive and much more precise to be useful for practitioners.

The dilemma of using either international experts with little local knowledge or local trainers with little experience in the subject matter has in part been overcome. Assistance providers increasingly use a 'train the trainer' approach to provide knowledge to local people who can then spread it further. In electoral assistance this is done, for example, by using the 'Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections' (BRIDGE) tools. This is a framework developed by International IDEA, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division, the Australian Electoral Commission, UNDP and the US-based democracy promotion organization,

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Recommendations

IFES. Although topics and target groups in party assistance are different from those in electoral assistance, the BRIDGE framework serves as a model for capacity-building tools in other areas of democracy assistance.

Party assistance activities are often linked to the specific goals of donors and assistance providers. For example, one frequent goal is to strengthen internal democracy. Others are to raise the number of women and youth involved in the organization of the party. Although these may be legitimate goals, assistance often fails to make clear whether these are ends in their own right or the means to achieve better democracy. If the latter were the case, this would have to be made explicit in terms of the functions of political parties explained in the introduction.

If party assistance is to have an effect, it needs to follow a sequence of steps, starting with identifying weaknesses and designing specific programmes to overcome them. What is needed is a framework to assess the situation, determine the needs and properly plan, implement and evaluate assistance activities. Proposals for this are made in the next section. ■

The purpose of this section is threefold. First, it argues the need for common principles, agreed by the community of actors. Second, it highlights three areas that these principles should cover: (a) a functional approach to political parties, (b) integration with other fields of democracy assistance and (c) a systematic project cycle. Third, it makes initial suggestions for tools that cover the three phases of the project cycle. The presentation of tools is far from complete. This part of the policy paper provides a basis for future discussion and is intended to give an idea of the direction in which discussions may lead.

Why do we need principles?

Party assistance has been accused—rightly or wrongly—of being too often unfocused, supply-driven and ineffective. While this can certainly not be said of all projects, there is some truth in these assertions. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) recognizes the need for better standards in development cooperation and makes several recommendations on how to improve effectiveness. Not every part of it is relevant to party assistance, but the general challenge is the same. The Paris Declaration calls for harmonization and more monitoring and transparency.

Principles do not limit, they enable. They give assistance partners tools to assess their strengths and weaknesses, to determine their needs in terms of specific assistance and to actively go out and seek this assistance. With such principles, party assistance would be much more demand-driven in the future. Principles help donors to determine how to spend their money wisely to maximize effect and they enable assistance providers to be efficient and serve their mission in the best possible way.

The fundamental aim of principles for party assistance is to get the balance right between sufficient systematization and more contextualization. Systematization is needed for the procedures, that is, planning, funding, implementation, evaluation and institutional memory. Contextualization is needed for the content of the assistance. The current situation in international party assistance is often the opposite. The procedures are unstandardized while assistance providers are tempted to use off-the-shelf approaches for the content.

Functions first

In the introduction to this paper we described the essential functions that parties perform in a democratic system. These functions are:

1. To develop consistent policies and build programmatic platforms: the interest articulation function.

2. To pick up demands from society and bundle them: the interest aggregation function.

3. To recruit and select people for positions in government and the legislature.

The fourth function (oversight and control of government) is not mentioned here, because it is partly a procedural function that follows from the first three. If a party is performing satisfactorily in the first three functions it is likely to translate this performance into effective scrutiny of government in parliament. In addition, it is also an end in itself, because it means that there are alternatives to the current government on the political market, which is the essence of pluralism.

To make the abstract functions more manageable, we divide them into six dimensions that can be assessed for an individual party or a party system as a whole. The interest articulation function is determined by the degree to which a party programme is comprehensive and consistent. Interest aggregation includes the dimensions of having a bottom-up structure and a broad structure, meaning that it is firmly rooted in society. The recruitment function is defined as having an inclusive and a competitive recruitment process.

The six dimensions can be mapped on a spider chart (see Figure 2). Each of the six axes measures how well a certain dimension
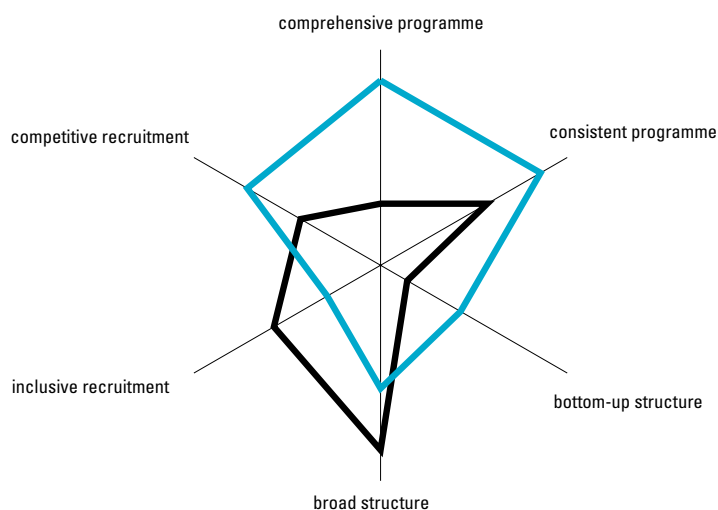
is performing in a given case. Owing to the qualitative nature of the assessment, a five-point scale (very low, low, average, high, very high) is recommended. By connecting the measured values for each of the dimensions one obtains the individual performance profile for a party or party system. This profile can then be matched with a capability profile.

A capability profile is similar to a party performance profile. Instead of measuring a party's performance, it maps the potential of a given assistance activity to enhance each of the dimensions. By overlaying performance profiles and capability profiles it is easy to select an appropriate activity for a given situation.

In the example, we have a party (represented by the black line) that has a broad structure, meaning that it is represented widely in the country and the society. Its

recruitment processes are average both in terms of competitiveness and inclusiveness. The party's programme is consistent, but not very comprehensive. Most likely, the party will have policy proposals for just a few of the relevant issues in the country. Also, the party is very hierarchical—it is top-down rather than bottom-up.

Any assistance activity for this party would probably address its two main weaknesses, namely the narrow programme and the top-down structure. The chosen activity in this case (represented by the blue line) is targeted at the programmatic dimension. As a side-effect it also enhances the competitiveness of the recruitment process. This is, of course, only a hypothetical example to illustrate the use of the profiles. However, it could be a project that links policies to the selection of candidates for party and government offices by helping party officials to develop a set of proposals with which they can compete for office.

Assistance programmes should identify weaknesses through careful pre-project assessment and tailor activities accordingly, rather than following an activity-based approach, where the type of activity is decided upon first. Idealistic perceptions of how parties should operate should be dropped. It is highly unrealistic to expect parties in young democracies to behave in a way that parties in established democracies rarely do, and if programmes are entirely based on this assumption it could even be counterproductive.

Integration is the key

In order to be effective, party assistance programmes have to be increasingly seen as part of a holistic democracy assistance approach. This does not mean that individual activities will no longer be possible, but rather that they should be carefully put into a broader context and be coordinated with efforts in the field of electoral assistance, civil society, constitution building and the rule of law.

All activities have to be part of an overall programme based on a careful needs assessment. Assistance providers and donors are often criticized for carrying out individual activities—such as a single workshop or a one-year programme—rather than larger, more comprehensive projects. It is not a problem to run a single activity as long as it is made clear where this activity is situated in the overall framework.

Integration means not only bringing the different components of democracy assistance together, but also bringing the different actors together. Many of the suspicions and hesitations around party assistance could be overcome if, for example, donors would seek multilateral ways to channel their money rather than doing it alone (Kumar 2005: 517–8). The same holds true for assistance providers, especially the partisan ones. If individual projects are integrated into an overall scheme for strengthening the party system of a given country, the assistance providers could continue working with specific actors but effectively counter the accusations of inappropriate influence (a similar demand is made by Gershman and Allen 2006).

Party assistance has been dominated by party foundations thus far, as can be easily judged from the budget overview in Table 1. The foundations have done very valuable work, but there are other actors that could complement their activities. Party Internationals are well suited to develop

general norms for their ideological family. Membership creates an incentive for parties to comply and the regular exchange should foster accountability. Party Internationals are notoriously underfunded and have difficulties carrying out extensive programmes, but they have become increasingly interested in party assistance activities.

Other intergovernmental and parliamentary bodies are also entering the scene or working on related topics such as parliamentary support. These institutions should be encouraged to intensify their activities in the field of party assistance. Examples of these bodies are the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the OAS, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Southern African Development Cooperation–Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF).

Systematic planning and implementation

Comprehensive needs assessment

The starting point of any project activity has to be careful needs assessment and planning. In this phase, three essential questions have to be answered:

1. What is the situation like now?
2. What will it be like in the future and how do we want it to be?
3. What are the appropriate activities to achieve the desired outcome?

Needs assessment should always keep in mind the long-term perspective. While individual projects cannot usually solve all problems at once, it is important to know where a country should be heading. It is a common complaint among assistance providers that

donors are too short-sighted and not willing enough to fund long-term projects. Only part of the blame lies with the donors, however. Carefully assessed projects can and should serve long-term goals even if they themselves are limited in scope. If a staircase represents the way to enhanced democracy, each project represents one step—at least if assistance providers emphasize cooperation rather than competition. Needs assessment should address the question of the sustainability of the assistance project. While the call for longer-term projects is frequent, any measurement should aim at enabling the target of the activity—whether it is a single party or a party system—to be self-sufficient in a reasonable time. It is clearly not desirable to base programmes on the assumption that assistance will be needed indefinitely.

Needs assessment should follow a general scheme in order to be comparable. One important thing is that the assistance partners need to be involved. All assistance is doomed if it addresses an aspect that is not considered relevant by the assistance partners themselves. Important gatekeepers and decision-makers—most notably the party leaders—have to be involved from the very beginning. This ensures that they feel engaged and are more likely to take advantage of the assistance. Depending on the circumstances, a consultative committee with high-level representatives from the political parties and other key stakeholders could be convened in the initial phase of a project to provide input and act as a feedback forum.

Proper needs assessment is time-consuming and expensive. Different assistance providers should not carry out overlapping analyses, as this would be a waste of resources. Therefore, all material resulting from needs assessment endeavours should be made public and be

shared widely. This demand is also being made for development cooperation in general (see for example OECD 2003: 31–44). For obvious reasons, many actors are reluctant to release such material. After all, despite having the same goal there is still a fair amount of competition and some actors may fear that they would be giving away an advantage. Nonetheless, to improve effectiveness it is very important that different assistance providers share their experiences. Regular exchange forums should encourage them to do so.

Despite the general call for openness and transparency, one caveat should be noted. Work with political parties is more political and more sensitive than most other areas of democracy assistance and development cooperation. The need for cooperation among assistance providers to enhance the effectiveness of their programmes may collide with demands from political parties to treat information confidentially. There is no silver bullet as regards how to deal with this issue, as it has to be addressed from case to case.

The two first sections under "Tools for the project cycle" present two examples of how to assess the current situation of democracy and to look into the future. The first is International IDEA's State of Democracy Assessment, the second is Scenario Development. They complement each other and greatly facilitate the initial planning for a successful project.

Thorough monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are closely linked to needs assessment. Only when activities are results-based and developed on the basis of a careful needs assessment can they be evaluated. Measuring the impact of democracy-building activities is a challenge,

but stakeholders should still try to develop appropriate tools.

Evaluation starts with the planning phase of a project. It is at this stage that appropriate indicators have to be chosen and a decision has to be made about the data that need to be gathered for this purpose during the implementation of the project. Unfortunately, the beginning of a project is the point at which the people responsible for designing it are least likely to think of these seemingly far away requirements. Yet failure to define evaluation needs at this stage will result in higher evaluation costs later or even make proper evaluation impossible.

As with needs assessment, it is important not only that each project is properly evaluated, but also that the results are made available beyond the group of organizations directly involved. There is an understandable reluctance to disclose evaluation results, especially if they document weaknesses and failures. Yet, for the sake of improvement of party assistance all stakeholders should be able to learn from other experiences.

Evaluation usually requires indicators. Depending on the nature of the underlying information, indicators can use different levels of measurement, ranging from ordinal (for example, low, middle and high) to ratio (numerical values with an absolute zero, such as number of participants). Indicators can either be lead or lag indicators. Lag indicators measure past performance while lead indica- tors are a proxy for future developments. For example, the number of registered participants could be a lead indicator for the size of the event itself. Regarding the measurement focus, there are four different categories: (a) input in- dicators that measure how many resources are put into the project, (b) output indicators that measure how many products are produced,

for example, how many reports have been published, (c) outcome indicators that measure the effects of the output and (d) impact indicators that measure the medium- or long-term impact on the over-arching project goal (OECD 2003: 57).

The indicators chosen to measure the objectives should be a mix of lead and lag indicators and of the different measurement focuses above. It usually gets more difficult to find suitable indicators as one moves down the list.

Input and output measurements belong to the sphere of operational control and are useful mainly for implementation monitoring. Evaluation at this level is usually done by the programme staff members themselves. Impact studies are mostly long-term (some might have to cover several years) and are not done by the implementing staff. This is for two reasons. First, evaluation should not be done entirely by those who are responsible for the project, because there are natural inherent limits to objectivity in reflection. Second, impact evaluation is clearly outside the project lifespan or cycle. Outcome evaluation is located in between and can be seen as part of either the internal evaluation or the external impact study.

Finally, it should be noted that comprehensive impact studies may not always be feasible. As noted, these are long-term tasks that are complex and can be costly. To avoid inefficiency, however, it is crucial to have impact studies for new activities and pilot projects that are later supposed to be scaled up or implemented elsewhere. Pilot projects in particular should be carefully designed to enable proper evaluation, for example with regard to the venue, selection of participants and contextual factors.

Tools for the project cycle

International IDEA's State of Democracy Assessment methodology

The State of Democracy Assessment (SoD) is a methodological framework developed by International IDEA together with researchers from the University of Essex. It is a tool for assessing how well democracy works in a country from the differing perspectives of its citizens. The rationale behind its development was the observation that democracy had become the norm in many parts of the world, yet many people were dissatisfied with the quality and performance of their democratic system. The State of Democracy Assessment is not the only measurement for democracy, but a number of characteristics make it unique.

SoD is based on democratic principles and values against which institutional arrangements are assessed. It places the responsibility of assessment in the hands of the citizens, or internal actors, and it is based on the principles of popular participation and ownership. The framework is the most comprehensive tool for assessing democratic performance. It is also a flexible framework that allows for contextualization of the assessment. Table 4 summarizes the assessment framework. The four-pillar framework covers 14 different aspects of democracy, including one that specifically deals with political parties.

The primary purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a democracy, and use the findings to identify and pursue priorities for democratic reform in the specific country of assessment. Local ownership of both the assessment process and the findings is critical. An assessment carried out following International

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Table 4: Categories of International IDEA's State of Democracy Assessment framework

Citizenship, law and rights	Representative and accountable government	Civil society and popular participation	Democracy beyond the state
Nationhood and citizenship	Free and fair elections	Media in a democratic society	International dimensions of democracy
Rule of law and access to justice	Democratic role of political parties	Political participation	
Civil and political rights	Government effectiveness and accountability	Government responsiveness	
Economic and social rights	Civilian control of the military and the police	Decentralization	
	Minimizing corruption		

Source: IDEA (2007).

IDEA's framework will always be done from within a country, not from the outside. As such, the assessment itself will already have an impact on democracy. This is neither unwanted nor merely a collateral effect, it is one of the purposes of the assessment. The assessment process itself contributes to the democratization process of a country through debates and dialogues around salient issues emerging from the assessment.

In what ways can the democracy assessment be useful for a needs assessment in the area of party assistance? There are two options. One is to conduct a fully fledged assessment and use the results to design appropriate party assistance projects. In many ways, this is the best choice, because it gives the full picture rather than just a specific part. However, this would be an extensive project of its own that requires considerable resources both in terms of time and money.

If a full assessment is not possible, staged and/or targeted assessments are possible. For example, an assessment focusing only on the aspect of the democratic role of political

parties may be undertaken. Any democracy assessment should be complemented by a thorough assessment of the party functions described above.
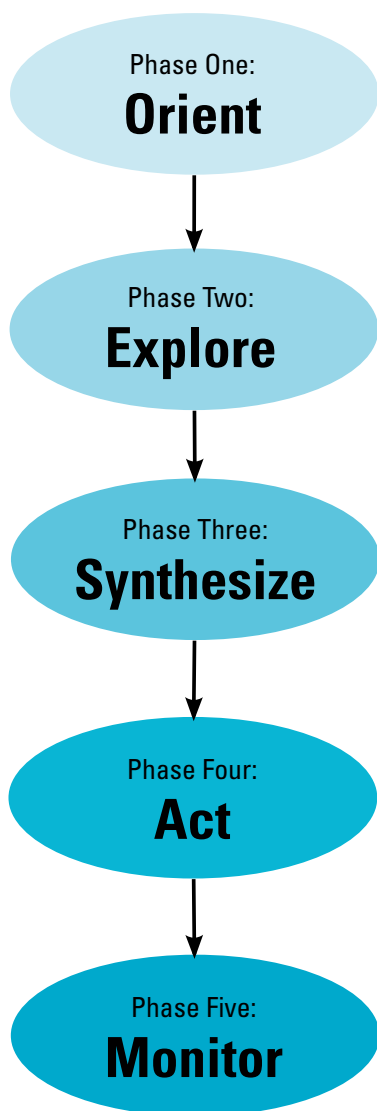
In-depth information about the International IDEA's democracy assessment methodology may be found in a booklet published by International IDEA (IDEA 2002) or the comprehensive Handbook on Democracy Assessment (IDEA 2007).

Scenario development

Once we have a picture of what the situation looks like now, we need a way to make projections about the future. Scenarios are a way of thinking about the future. They are based on the assumption that a great part of the future is determined by unknown factors or variables that we cannot predict. Therefore, rather than just extrapolating from the present, scenario development tries to identify different possibilities of what the future could look like. Scenario development means two things: a process for developing a vision of the future and a way of dealing with uncertainty itself. Great emphasis is placed on creativity, both during the generation of scenarios and in their use. In that sense, scenarios are not supposed to be accurate predictions, but rather a means of stimulating thought about the future.

Like many strategic planning frameworks, scenario thinking has its origin in the military. In the 1960s it was adapted for business use. The oil company Royal Dutch Shell was a pioneer in this field and still publishes its Shell Global Scenarios.

Scenarios try to look at specific questions from the outside and from different angles. It is crucial that different stakeholders or even people not connected to the topic are involved. There are many reasons for engaging

Figure 3: Phases of scenario development

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        ┌─────────────────┐
        │   Phase One:    │
        │     Orient      │
        └─────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌─────────────────┐
        │   Phase Two:    │
        │     Explore     │
        └─────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌─────────────────┐
        │  Phase Three:   │
        │   Synthesize    │
        └─────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌─────────────────┐
        │   Phase Four:   │
        │       Act       │
        └─────────────────┘
                 │
                 ▼
        ┌─────────────────┐
        │   Phase Five:   │
        │    Monitor      │
        └─────────────────┘
```

shall concentrate on the specific application of scenario thinking to party assistance. Each process consists of five phases, as shown in Figure 3. The first three phases belong to the planning stage, the fourth deals with implementation and the fifth with evaluation. In phase 1, the scope and time horizon of the endeavour is determined. The result is a question that will lead all following steps. The time horizon has to be broad enough to include real changes but limited enough to make realistic assumptions about what the future will look like. For party assistance and democracy-related questions, looking five to ten years into the future is reasonable. Anything further ahead depends on too many unknowns and anything shorter than five years will lack the potential to include visionary changes.

The question for the scenario process needs to be broad enough to enable open discussion. Depending on the exact needs of the organization that carries it out, it may deal with the development of democracy in a country in general or with a more specific question. Examples are:

- What will democracy look like in country X in ten years?
- Will the parties in country X be stronger or weaker in five years?
- What challenges do parties face in country X in the next ten years?

Usually, determining the question will already involve talking to stakeholders and asking them about what they think will be important for democracy in the given time-frame.

Once the guiding question for the scenario process has been established, phase 2 begins. This is the exploration phase. The goal here is mainly to identify the forces that shape

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in scenario thinking and many ways of doing it (for a very good introduction see Scearce and Fulton 2004).

Scenarios can serve many different purposes and the way in which the process is carried out varies accordingly. Rather than describing the different options at length, we

the outcome. These 'driving forces' can be either known or unknown. Known factors are constants or variables that are relatively easy to predict, such as slow-changing demographic factors. As we can assume these to be set, they are included in each of the scenarios. More interesting are those forces that we are uncertain about. These will make up the different scenarios. Once a list of factors has emerged through brainstorming, the next phase starts.

Factors that should be considered when dealing with party assistance are socio-demographic changes in society, economic development, external (international) forces that have an impact on the internal situation, different actors, etc.

In phase 3, the results of the brainstorming are ordered and the scenarios put together.

The first step is to order the factors by their importance to the issue at stake and by their degree of uncertainty. Those factors that score highest on the two scales, that is, those that are most uncertain and most important, are the so-called critical uncertainties. Normally, these critical uncertainties can be mapped on a continuum. For example, if 'economic development' were to be a critical uncertainty, the continuum would range from 'weak' to 'strong'. If it were 'ethnic tensions', a continuum could range from 'irrelevant' to 'open violence'. The actual scenario framework is now drawn by combining two critical uncertainties in a two-dimensional matrix (see Figure 4).

The matrix has four quadrants, each of which represents one scenario. Hence, in our example the upper left scenario is one where ethnical conflicts are violent and the economy is weak, etc. The drawing of matrices is an iterative process, which means that after setting up a combination of two dimensions one has to test whether the resulting scenarios make sense. After some effort, eventually one will come up with a combination that does.

Once the framework is established, the scenarios are described in narratives. These are stories that vividly tell what the future will look like under this scenario. It is not crucial to depict the future accurately (which is impossible anyway), but to write the scenarios in a way that causes reflection among those who read them and encourages them to think.

Phase 4 is about putting the scenarios to work. By now, the planners have several resources at hand: an assessment of the current situation through a tool like the State of Democracy assessment, four different paintings of the future and an understanding of the functions of political parties in a democracy. At this stage, we know where we

Figure 4: Sample scenario matrix
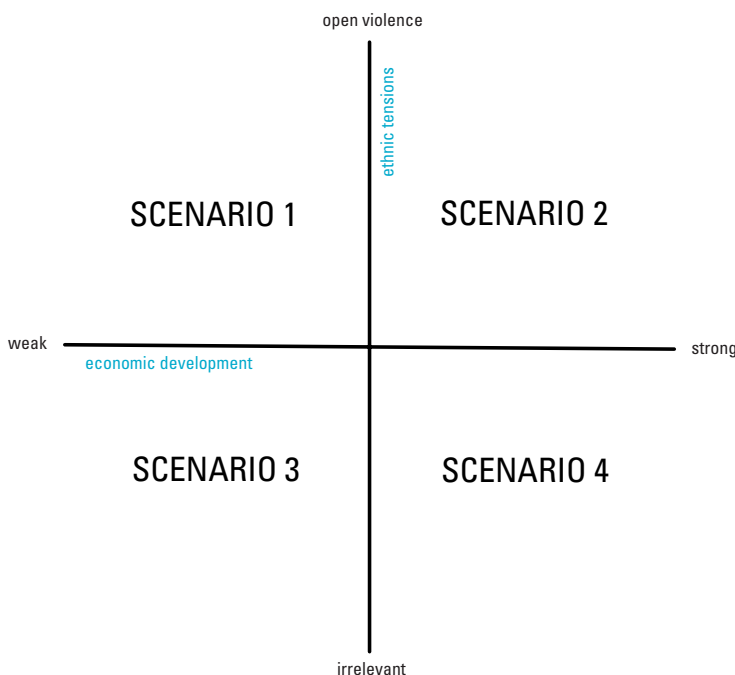
are (assessment), where we want to go (based on functions) and how external driving forces can influence the general picture (scenarios). The situation is illustrated in Figure 5. Choosing the right programmatic activity is built on the three pillars. The arrows symbolize different programmatic options for reaching the desired functional outcome in the context of different scenarios.

The choice of activity depends on many factors. One of them is risk. Some of the options may work in more than one scenario and are therefore low-risk. Others may only work in one or two scenarios, but promise to be very effective. These are high-risk options. Any project should include activities at different risk levels and be prepared for a variety of future scenarios. It is important to note that the scenarios are not detached from the project activity. Every project, of course, tries to influence the future, which means that not only does the future scenario influence the choice of activities, but that the future can change precisely through the activity. There is a mutual relationship.

The final phase deals with monitoring. In order to monitor, suitable indicators have to be established that are constantly monitored throughout the implementation of the assistance activity and afterwards. This is described in the next section.

Balanced Scorecard for party assistance projects

This section introduces the BSC as a tool for measuring the progress and impact of party assistance. Again, the purpose is not to give a comprehensive picture of what BSC is and can do. Rather, we shall limit ourselves to the concrete application of the tool to party assistance projects.

BSC connects the topic of this policy

Figure 5: Connecting needs assessment, scenarios and party functions
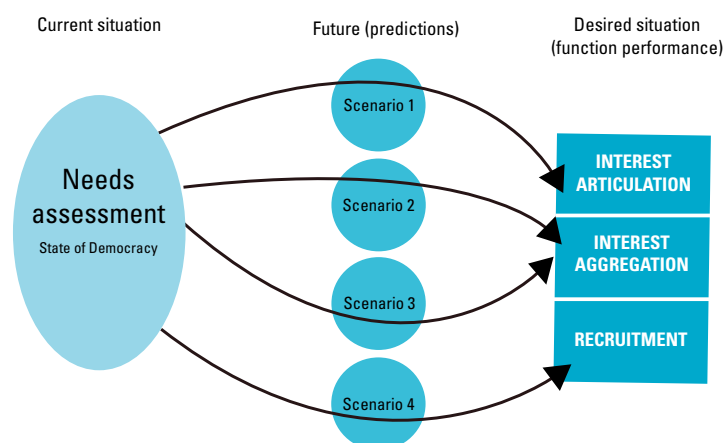
paper—effectiveness—with efficiency. Effectiveness means achieving the desired effect. Efficiency makes sure that it is achieved in a financially responsible way, that is, without spending unnecessary resources.

Needless to say, BSC, as scenario development, is a broad tool. It can be used to define the strategy of an entire organization and it is not limited to individual projects. BSC as a measurement tool can be used at different levels of an organization, from the very top to the individual staff member. If that is done, BSC can be imagined as a cascade with different levels of abstraction.

The BSC performance measurement system was originally developed for the corporate world. Robert Kaplan and David Norton of the Harvard Business School published the first article describing the framework in 1992 (Kaplan and Norton 1992).

Kaplan and Norton had realized that the almost exclusive focus in the corporate world on financial indicators as performance

measurement was not enough. According to them financial indicators suffered in particular from three weaknesses. First, they failed to measure intangible resources, such as employee qualifications and knowledge, which are crucial for business success. Second, financial indicators look backwards rather than into the future and, third, reliance on financial indicators led to short-term thinking. BSC is an answer to these shortcomings. It tries to establish a framework for financial and non-financial indicators in a balanced way, hence the name Balanced Scorecard. The aim of BSC is to provide a tool for the comprehensive measurement of a company's performance and a framework for executing corporate strategy.

In its original form, the BSC has four dimensions: financial, customer, internal business process, and learning and growth (see Figure 6). The financial perspective is concerned with economic success and the company's relationship to its shareholders.

The customer perspective asesses what kind of value proposition the company makes and how it should approach its customers. The internal process perspective deals with operational procedures that are necessary to achieve the goals vis-à-vis the shareholders and the customers. The learning and growth perspective identifies possible gaps in terms of employee knowledge and skills and describes ways to overcome them or generally to enhance capacity.

In short, BSC tries to balance different perspectives: internal and external, financial and non-financial, future and past. It is a tool that helps those who are responsible for the project to steer a course and it is a means of being accountable to stakeholders (or 'customers' in the BSC terminology). These can be donors, assistance partners or others influenced by the activity. Accountability is vital for all involved. Donor organizations have to justify the funds they make available, assistance providers have to show their ability to deliver and assistance partners have to know that their investments—time, commitment and other resources—are well spent.

Non-profit organizations follow a different logic from that of businesses. The most important difference is that the ultimate performance indicator for a company is how much money it makes—the bottom line. Non-profits have a mission that normally cannot be measured in monetary terms. The customer perspective is also different. Often, the one who pays for a service is not the one who benefits from it. When it comes to democracy assistance or party assistance, there is another difference. Performance measurement in terms of results is very difficult, if not impossible. The aim of party assistance is to strengthen democracy through

Figure 6: Perspectives of the basic Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton 1992)
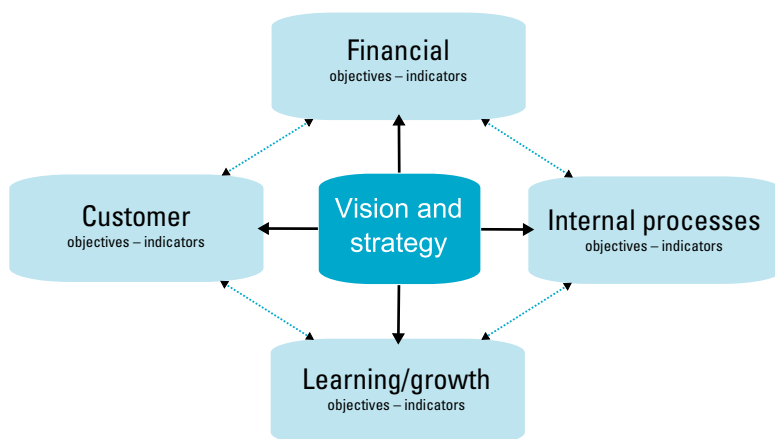
activities with political parties. Linking the success of an individual project to the overall progress of democracy in a country is probably doomed to fail. Progress in democracy is slow and complex and will in most cases be impossible to attribute to one specific activity. What is more, there is still a substantial amount of debate going on among academics and practitioners about whether and the extent to which it is possible to measure the level of democracy in any meaningful way.

Given all these differences, some adaptations have to be made to the BSC in order to make it useful for the non-profit sector. Again, we shall only concentrate here on the specific case of applying BSC as a performance measure for party assistance activity. Anyone interested in the broader picture is encouraged to read some of the extensive literature in the field, such as Niven (2003).

At the core of each BSC are four things (for an in-depth description see Bryson 2004): mission, vision, values and strategy. A mission is the *raison d'être* of an organization while the values describe the fundamental attitudes of the organization towards its work. It is not the purpose of an individual project to develop these.

Vision and strategy, on the other hand, may exist for an organization as a whole, but they are also essential for individual projects. The vision describes where you want to go. In that sense, it should be both ambitious and realistic. For example, the purpose of a party assistance project could be to make parties in the target country better able to fulfil certain functions where they currently have weaknesses. A vision is like a scenario, but with a normative touch. It does not describe how the future will be but how it *should* be.

In standard BSC, mission, values, vision and strategy are determined individually by a company. In democracy assistance it is crucial to have the full commitment of the primary stakeholders. Therefore it is advisable to develop the vision (that is, the aim) and the strategy (that is, the way to get there) jointly with donors, providers and assistance partners. Although the process should be a joint one, it is still described here with the assistance provider as the centrepiece. This has two reasons. For one, the assistance provider is the nexus between donor and assistance partner, which do not usually interact directly (see Figure 1). Second, in most cases the assistance provider will be the main driving force behind the development of the project, as it will ultimately be responsible for the implementation.

There are numerous books on strategy and how to develop one. There is no uniform definition of the term strategy, but normally it describes in a coherent way how the goal—stated in the vision—is supposed to be reached. A strategy defines priorities and these priorities are strongly linked to the functions of political parties described in the sections above entitled 'The functions of parties in a democracy' and 'Functions first'.

As the next and final step in the planning process, a BSC translates the strategy into measurable objectives that enable constant monitoring of the project's progress. At the end of a project, BSC allows stakeholders to determine not only whether the project was a success, but also what the particular strengths and weaknesses were. The process-orientation of BSC is important because, as is noted above, it might not be possible to determine success or failure by comparing the vision against the state of democracy after the end of the project. BSC is therefore a solution

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to overcoming the inherent immeasurability of results in democracy assistance.

The perspectives used in a BSC can be adapted to the needs of an individual project. For party assistance, we propose five perspectives:

• Partners

• Stakeholders

• Budget

• Operations

• Skills and competences

These are the angles from which we shall determine the success of the project. Partners are the direct stakeholders—donors, the assistance provider and the assistance partners. Stakeholders include any other group involved or affected by the activity, such as the media, civil society, government, etc. Budget deals with the financial perspective of funding and expenditures. Operations concerns internal processes for a successful project and the skills and competences perspective includes all the necessary knowledge and capacities needed for the project. For private-sector companies, the financial perspective is the ultimate measure of success. For a non-profit organization, such as a party assistance provider, the over-arching perspective is the mission and, derived from that, the vision for the specific activity. 'Vision' therefore goes at the top of the BSC (Kaplan 1999).

Once the basic information is there—a vision based on a needs assessment and future scenarios, a strategy highlighting the broad directions in which to drawing up the BSC is a two-step process: determining objectives for each of the perspectives and determining how to measure them. The objectives in the different perspectives depend on each other. For example, requirements in the operations perspective may have consequences for the

skills and competences perspective, because certain training is required or somebody with specific skills has to be hired. This in turn has implications for the budget perspective, etc. Key questions to ask when defining the objectives are:

• Partners: what do we have to do for and with our partners?

• Stakeholders: in what ways do we have to include other stakeholders?

• Budget: what are the budgetary needs and how can we raise the funds?

• Operations: what processes and activities are needed?

• Skills and competences: do we have all the knowledge and capacity necessary and, if not, how do we get them?

Given the variety of projects it is difficult to give more than general advice on how objectives should be defined. One important thing is that they have to be SMART— specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based. Objectives, however, are not mere instructions on tasks to perform. BSC is not a project management tool, it is a strategic performance measurement. As such, the number of objectives should normally not exceed four to five per perspective. If one considers that each objective will be measured by one or two indicators, five objectives times two indicators times five perspectives would already mean 50 developments that need to be monitored.

Other approaches to effective party assistance

The options suggested in this policy paper are not the only attempts to make party assistance more transparent, effective and accountable. One of International IDEA's core values is the idea of non-prescriptiveness when it

comes to institutional settings of democracy. International IDEA also applies this principle to the meta-level of project planning and implementation, meaning that it welcomes alternative or complementary approaches to making party assistance more effective.

One comprehensive example of a different framework is UNDP's Capacity Diagnostics Methodology (UNDP 2006a). It systematizes different types of capacities and capacity-building relevant to UNDP's work, describes ways of conducting a needs assessment and highlights indicators that can be used to monitor project progress. The framework is, however, limited to assessing capacity and therefore not suitable for all kinds of party assistance projects. UNDP has also published a *Handbook on Working with Political Parties* (UNDP 2006b) that includes a chapter on developing assistance programmes.

Other methodologies that were not specifically developed for party assistance projects can still be useful. (Sometimes, they need to be adapted as appropriate.) Examples are 'Drivers of Change' from the DFID. This is an analysis framework that tries to identify agents, institutions and structures that drive or inhibit change. Sida's 'Power Analysis' takes a similar approach. This information is important and should directly feed into the needs assessment and planning phase. ■

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Conclusions

Party assistance is a complex field with many actors and a broad range of programmatic approaches. It is also more sensitive and political than other fields of democracy assistance—such as electoral assistance—which usually include a considerable amount of technical assistance. The simultaneous lack of systematization and contextualization leads to projects that are either inefficient or the impact of which only be guessed.

Given the sensitivity of work with political parties, these weaknesses also make it easy to accuse international party assistance of being partisan or of interfering with the internal affairs of other countries. Joint principles would help to overcome this situation and would enable rather than limit actors.

While diversity is good, common principles greatly facilitate exchange of information and make information more easily available und understandable. It is highly desirable to develop these principles of effective party assistance. Strong involvement of all stakeholders is fundamental in the future. The assistance partner perspective is especially important and its inclusion must be ensured.

The principles have to balance different needs. On the one hand, they have to be open and general enough to accommodate very divergent project needs and operational requirements. On the other hand, they have to be specific enough to serve the primary goal of common standards, which is to facilitate exchange of information, more precise activities and better cooperation and coordination. Beginning in 2008, International IDEA will invite stakeholders to a series of workshops on the different sub-topics highlighted in this policy paper to advance towards common principles for effective party assistance.

Developing principles and tools is not easy, but it can be done. This policy paper makes recommendations and suggestions for possible ways. This is, however, only the start of a process. The international party assistance community—donors, providers and assistance partners—now have to come together to discuss the matter further. International IDEA is prepared to act as a convenor and will come forward with concrete proposals on how the process can be organized.
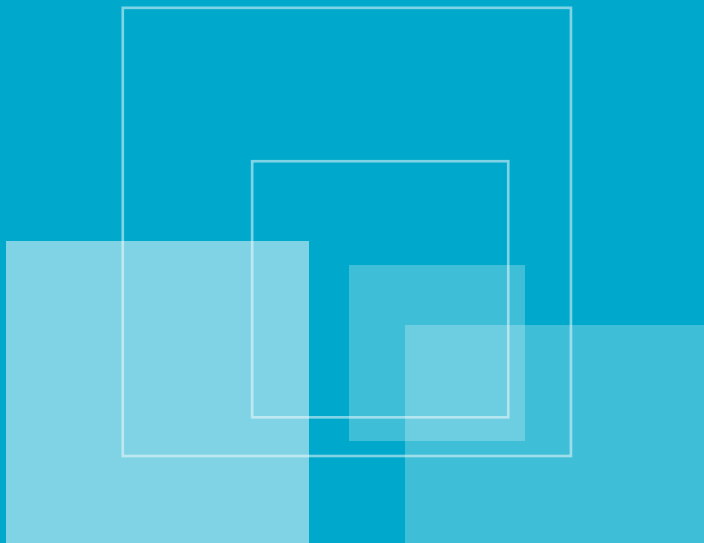
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Abbreviations

AECI	Spanish Agency for International Cooperation
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections
BSC	Balanced Scorecard
CDI	Center for Democratic Institutions (Australia)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EMB	Electoral Management Body
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Germany)
FNSt	Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany)
FPI	Pablo Iglesias Foundation (Spain)
HBS	Heinrich Böll Foundation (Germany)
HSS	Hanns Seidel Foundation (Germany)
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRI	International Republican Institute (United States)
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany)
NDI	National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (United States)
NED	National Endowment for Democracy (United States)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPIC	Olof Palme International Center (Sweden)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RLS	Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Germany)
SADC-PF	Southern African Development Cooperation – Parliamentary Forum
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SoD	State of Democracy Assessment
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy (United Kingdom)