

THE
OSLO
CENTER
ANNUAL
REPORT

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PEACE
DEMOCRACY
HUMAN RIGHTS

BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS – A PREREQUISITE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Oslo Center believes that UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 - particularly building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions on all levels - is a prerequisite to ensure sustainable development in its entirety. It is a necessity to secure human rights, and in turn lasting peace.

Throughout 2018 the Oslo Center has continued its work for strong and inclusive democratic institutions in several countries such as Kenya, Ukraine, South Sudan, Somalia and Sri Lanka. We have provided comparative knowledge, shared practical experience, created venues for conflict prevention, facilitated dialogues and contributed to strengthening political institutions.

The Oslo Center is an independent and non-partisan democracy assistance center, grounding its work in three core principles;

We advocate for **inclusive** institutions and equality in political representation and

participation in states where rights of minorities and marginalized groups are upheld.

Working with political parties, institutions and civil society, we emphasize the importance of **integrity** through public trust and local ownership in a homegrown democracy.

We **commit** to a practical and long-term approach to our assistance, as democratic change transpires over time.

The Oslo Center remains focused on its goal - a world consisting of stable democracies based on human rights and equality. We take a holistic approach to democracy assistance as we continue our work to assist in building strong, democratic institutions.



Kjell Ola Ringseth

Executive Chair of
the Oslo Center

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

The UN Sustainable Development Agenda takes a holistic approach to sustainable development and prosperity. The Agenda calls for all countries to promote sustainable economic growth, while addressing social needs such as education, equality and job opportunities, on top of tackling climate change.

The Oslo Center believes that democracy is a prerequisite for sustainable development, as sustainable development and lasting peace cannot be reached without inclusive, democratic institutions. Therefore, our work is deeply intertwined with Sustainable Development Goal 16 while still in compliance with the agenda as a whole, in particular number 1 *End Poverty*, 5 *Gender Equality*, 8 *Decent Work and Economic Growth* and 17 *Partnerships for the Goals*.

SDG 16, target 16.6 on ‘developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels’ frames our work with political parties, institutions and civil society. In 2018 we assisted in building inclusive and democratic institutions in countries such as Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.

When offering technical assistance to political parties, a requested focus is often on ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (SDG 16, target 16.7), while also ensuring that the institutions are transparent, as highlighted in SDG 16, target 16.5.

We work continuously with ‘strengthening relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels.’ (SDG 16, target 16.A). This includes our work with parliaments and other relevant democratic institutions. Our work with political parties and parliaments is consistently focused on ensuring gender equality and youth participation through securing meaningful inclusion.

In 2018, we created bottom-up indicators for citizen inclusion which seek to inform policy-makers of citizen priorities on inclusion in decision-making. By mapping citizen inclusion, we encourage institutions to ‘ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.’ (SDG 16, target 16.7).

- = Head office
- = Regional office
- = Project countries

WHERE WE WORK



BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS - STRENGTHENING PROCESSES

By providing technical assistance and support to government institutions, political parties, legislative frameworks and civil society, the Oslo Center has worked to support inclusive and democratic structures and processes in countries in Africa, Asia and Europe.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Supported by Norwegian MFA through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi, the Oslo Center has assisted political parties in becoming more democratic, inclusive and representative in Somalia and Kenya.

In Somalia, as a direct result of the Oslo Center's engagement on the political party law, registration of several temporarily registered political parties was initiated mid-2017. Consequently, the Oslo Center has provided support to the establishment and coordination of the National Independent Electoral Commission. Emphasis was put on women and youth wings of the political parties, demonstrated by the establishment of a parliamentary youth caucus, in which the Oslo Center provided comparative experiences and meeting places for the process.

In addition, the Oslo Center has worked closely

with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and provided organizational comparative knowledge, as well as country specific recommendations. The OPM in Somalia came to Oslo on a study visit, with the aim to exchange experiences on quality improvement of administrative structures.

In Kenya, the program aimed at offering technical assistance to enable political parties to comply with the legal requirements. In 2018, the Oslo Center facilitated a process where parties evaluated their performance in the 2017 election and used the findings to strengthen policy development processes and in particular to develop policy implementation and oversight mechanisms. The parties evaluated their performance during party nominations, deliberating on how to enhance consultations with the party members and the public during the process. Parties also evaluated and resolved to prioritize strengthening of the youth league structures.

The project assisted the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to develop operationalization documents for the ORPP and the Political Party and Campaign Finance Unit (PPCFU) in IEBC to fulfill their mandate. In particular, the assistance developed operationalization documents for the six party lists in the electoral system, including the nomination process, submission of party lists and allocation of seats. The program was finalized in both countries in 2018.

CONSENSUS AND COALITION BUILDING



In 2018, the Oslo Center engaged key actors from the Ukrainian Parliament, Verkhovna Rada, through a range of seminars and training sessions on consensus and coalition building. In partnership with National Democratic Institute (NDI), supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kyiv, the project focuses on shared experiences between the Verkhovna Rada and practitioners across other parliaments and governments. A special focus was given on the ongoing reform processes in Ukraine, where the Oslo Center and NDI assist political parties with tools to overcome political barriers and deadlocks.

In May, the Parliamentary staff in the Ukrainian Parliament traveled to Oslo for the second time to meet their peers, and exchange lessons learned and best practices on reform processes. The delegates attended shadowing sessions in the Norwegian Parliament with their counterparts from the Norwegian political parties' heads of Secretariat and the Office of the Speaker.

In partnership with the Norwegian Christian Democratic Party, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), a new project with the Parliament of Sri Lanka was initiated in 2018. The project focuses on strengthening consensus and coalition building in the Parliament. Sri Lanka is likely to continue to have minority-led coalitions in parliament, and experiences from Norway have been deemed especially relevant for this context.



Members of Parliament and key members of the administration traveled to Oslo for a week-long study visit in October to meet their peers at the Norwegian Parliament and representatives from various political parties, with the aim of identifying valuable and parallel lessons from the Norwegian context in consensus and coalition building. In-depth workshops provided practical experiences from various countries, addressing cooperation challenges faced in different countries, and presenting how different conflict management mechanisms and rules of procedure may secure successful cooperation.

SUPPORTING POLITICAL PARTIES

The Oslo Center aims at strengthening the capacity of political parties to be more inclusive, transparent and accountable. Supported by the Embassy of Denmark in Nairobi through Uraia Trust, a project was initiated to promote inclusive party processes in Kenya, by strengthening the national party secretariat and assisting political parties to increase constructive youth participation in political party processes.

Through the project, political parties have evaluated their needs at the national secretariat, developed operationalization and training documents, and trained their staff at the secretariat. Parties have also restructured their secretariats to effectively coordinate party activities. The project has equipped youth with knowledge and skills to effectively contribute constructively to party processes. Party Youth leagues have

developed legal documents to legally anchor youth structures in the parties and developed training material for the youth at national and county levels. They have also developed strategies to increase their participation in party processes. To achieve this, they have identified a pool of trainers to cascade trainings at the grassroots. Beyond this project, youth leagues have proactively extended grassroots trainings on their own.

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY



For several years, the Oslo Center has assisted local initiatives in identifying mechanisms for dialogue, consultations and citizens' engagement using democratic and peaceful means to address grievances and issues of concern. This is seen as one way of preventing youth from joining radical, violent and extremist groups with the hope that their problems could be addressed through alternative and constructive platforms. This is one of the reasons behind the Oslo Center's engagement with the Mombasa Youth Assembly (MYA) and school-based Peace Clubs in Kenya, supported by the AKO Foundation and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi respectively.

MYA is a youth initiative where the concerns of the youth are discussed at a local village level, and recommendations are forwarded to the relevant local, county and national actors. MYA has become a force in the local political debate on the Coast. Following the success on the Mombasa Youth

Assembly (MYA) in Mombasa County, and the need for further working with mechanisms for dialogue on the Coast of Kenya, the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi through Diakonia is supporting the Oslo Center to facilitate the advancement of the Youth Assemblies. The year of 2018 mainly focused on the revitalization of the Mombasa Youth Assembly, and initiated processes in Kwale and Lamu for the establishment of Youth Assemblies. The project has assisted the MYA structure to initiate and reactivate engagement with the youth and the community in general, to identify issues affecting them and their solutions, as well as the demand for service delivery from duty bearers at local community forums and policy levels in the county in a constructive way using a parliamentary model. In 2018 key members of MYA have been identified and trained to assist in the establishment of the Youth Assemblies in Kwale and Lamu. Capacity building curriculum in the two target counties is also being developed.

The school-based Peace Clubs was originally a Kenyan government initiative in collaboration with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). The Oslo Center was invited to assist in the revitalizing of this mechanism, providing youth a platform for dialogue and addressing local issues. This engagement included primary and secondary schools as well as universities.

The local engagement for this after-school, non-curriculum activity has been extraordinary. The program has seen the rise of a significant number of young peace ambassadors. The initiative contributes to increased knowledge and engagement in how the community can seek local solutions, secure peaceful co-existence and cooperate with local authorities. The Oslo Center is working with Bjørknes University College to have a more formalized curriculum developed for the different actors and target groups in the Peace Clubs into 2019.

ENSURING LOCAL PERSPECTIVES IN CITIZEN INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE



In cooperation with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), the Oslo Center initiated a program in 2016 supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY). The project was finalized in 2018 and created innovative bottom-up indicators of Citizen Inclusion and Confidence (CIC) in transitional processes. The aim of the CIC-indicators was to inform national and international policymakers on citizen priorities regarding inclusion. The project produced new research and analysis that can contribute to inclusive policymaking through mechanisms that could increase public confidence and citizen inclusion in transitional political processes in Kenya and South Sudan, and beyond.

The key findings from the research, including CIC indicators and research method, as well as policy recommendations for Kenya and South Sudan, were published in a report titled *Transitional Processes and Citizen Inclusion in Kenya and South Sudan*. There were several stages of the launch of the report, including validation workshops and dissemination workshops, engaging key stakeholders and relevant individuals for comments and contributions. The launch has sparked great interest and valuable discussions among local and international policymakers and civil society actors. The consortium is currently working on securing a next phase of the program.

A CLOSER LOOK – AN EXAMPLE OF DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

The Oslo Center's three-year democracy assistance project in Somalia was concluded in February of this year with a study mission to Oslo attended by core staff from the Office of the Prime Minister and Office of the President in Somalia. The agenda for the visit focused on introducing the delegation to the Norwegian political system and encourage learning from their peers in the Office of the Prime Minister of Norway on quality improvement of administrative structures and documentation of proposals and policy debates within the OPM.

Special regard was paid to structuring and institutionalizing internal processes of the executive offices in order to increase efficiency and build institutional memory among political and civil servants. Processes discussed included calendar management and inter- and intra-departmental communications, and the delegates signed a lessons learned document to be implemented in their daily work. Upon return to Somalia, the delegates presented their lessons learned from the visit to Oslo to their colleagues at a special session in Mogadishu.



“ I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Oslo Center for the lessons learned during the February study visit to Oslo. My colleagues found it very interesting to learn about the Norway system of governance and suggested that we replicate some of the roles/responsibilities of the Norway OPM, such as in the communication and domestic departments. ”

– Nafisa Santur, Office of the Prime Minister of Somalia.

ACTIVITIES IN NORWAY

ANNUAL SEMINAR: THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY



In June, the Oslo Center hosted its Annual Seminar focusing on the current state of democracy worldwide. The Annual Seminar featured two guest speakers: Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and Chair of the Oslo Center Board of Trustees, detailed the future of democracy in a turbulent Europe, while Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spoke on the role of democracy assistance in Norwegian development policy. Moderated by esteemed journalist, Christian Borch, the event gathered the Oslo Center Board of Directors, Board of Trustees and members of the international affairs community and general public.

The speakers prompted an important discussion on key aspects for the future of democracy and global trends' effect on democratic development, human rights, aid policy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ARENDALSUKA 2018



During 'Arendalsuka', an annual forum for political debate in Norway, the Oslo Center partnered with United Nations Association Norway, UNDP Nordic Representation Office and UNDP Oslo Governance Centre to host a timely debate on Norway's role and responsibilities in the multilateral system.

The event explored whether the multilateral system is under threat and how Norway can contribute to reverting the increasingly global trend of nationalism, fake news and lack of trust in cooperative, multilateral institutions. Moderated by the Oslo Center's Executive Chair, Kjell Magne Bondevik, the event featured panelists: Endre Stiansen, Senior Research & Policy Advisor at UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Stefan Heggelund, Member of Parliament from the Conservative Party and Hilde F. Johnson, Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Party.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2018, the Oslo Center received project funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nairobi, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kyiv through National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Embassy of Denmark in Nairobi through Uraia Trust, the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi through Diakonia, AKO Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York through National Democratic Institute (NDI), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) through Norwegian Christian Democratic Party and other institutional donors.

The Oslo Center also receives private donations. These contributions have been given without preconditions other than those which follow from the Oslo Center's vision and mission, by-laws, strategic plan and good accounting practice.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our 2018 sponsors:

- Scandic Hotels
- Arne Fredly
- Nordic American Tankers LMT
- James Raimer
- Naguib Sawiris
- Havila Holding AS

From 2019, the Oslo Center will make it possible to contribute with a donation through our website.

We thank all our donors and sponsors for continuously supporting the important work of democracy assistance and for making our work possible.

BJØRKNES UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

In the year of 2018, the Oslo Center formed a cooperation agreement with Bjørknes University College. We would like to give our special appreciation to Bjørknes University College and look forward to continuation and further exploration of our fruitful partnership.

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRACY

In 2018, the Oslo Center joined the European Partnership for Democracy (EpD) network in Brussels, containing many relevant European democracy assistance organizations and NGOs. We extend our gratitude to EpD and look forward to future cooperation with the network.

ABOUT THE OSLO CENTER

PARTNERS

We believe we can achieve more by enhancing political cooperation and responsible leadership through long-term cooperation, and by working in partnership with governments and other actors.

We have two main groups of partners:

- 1) Partners with whom we implement programs and activities; and
- 2) Partners with whom we collaborate from a strategic perspective.

In addition, we maintain contact with a wide range of other local, national and international networks, organizations and individuals that are regarded as important in the execution of our programs and activities.

OSLO CENTER US FOUNDATION

A MoU with the Oslo Center, US Foundation and Norway Hub at Augsburg College in Minnesota, USA focuses on providing financial and professional support for the Oslo Center's mission and vision.

BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik (Norway) Chairman of the Board. Former Prime Minister of Norway and Founder and Executive Chair of the Oslo Center. **Mr. Sverre Lodgaard** (Norway) Senior Research Fellow, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). **Ms. Lone Dybkjær** (Norway) Member of Parliament, Former Member of the EU Parliament, Former Minister of Environment. **Ms. Turid Leirvoll** (Denmark) Party Secretary of Socialist People's Party (SF) in Denmark. **Mr. Stig Olav Jacobsen** (Norway) Investor, Berg Jacobsen Group (*stepped down in June 2018*). **Ms. Elsbeth Sande Tronstad** (Norway) Senior Vice President, SN Power (*appointed in September 2018*). **Mr. Knut Vollebæk** (Norway) Former Minister of Foreign Affairs. **Ms. Julie Christiansen** (Norway) Former Member of Parliament. **Ms. Oda Misje Haug** (Norway) Staff representative, Advisor.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees is an advisory board consisting of 34 (Norwegian and international) members from several parts of the world. The trustee members, both Norwegian and international, bring a diverse background of experience, including national and international politics, international diplomacy, academia and civil society. In 2018, the Board of Trustees was chaired by the former President of Finland, H.E. Tarja Halonen.

A LETTER FROM OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the new Executive Director of the Oslo Center from 2019, I am honored to be introduced to the extensive experience that sits in the history and staff of the organization, chaired and guided by the former Prime Minister of Norway, Kjell Magne Bondevik. The Oslo Center has developed and evolved to become a very important organization in Norway's work with democracy assistance and development of human rights and peaceful societies.

The importance of assisting democratic institutions and processes is at the forefront in the international community today. It is imminent for every organization that is part of this work, to come together under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and focus on what we have agreed to accomplish towards 2030. Under SDG 16 we have committed ourselves to provide leadership, guidance and recommendations for peace, justice and strong institutions for sustainable development. The Oslo Center believes that SDG 16 is a prerequisite for the 2030 Agenda and is focused in our work to do our part to reach it.

I would like, together with the team in Oslo and Nairobi, to continue this development, to secure peace and stability in areas that face instability and challenges today. Moving forward we hope that the Oslo Center will continue to be a requested partner for countries in need of assistance and comparative experiences in processes of building and sustaining democracy to secure the future for all citizens. From local grassroot activities

to development of political party structures, we can build sustainable institutions that will help develop each country to ensure inclusive and responsive democracies.

To be able to sustain and develop our efforts, I see a need to continue to build long-term relationship with different governments and institutional donors. Through these, the Oslo Center will be able to secure continued democracy assistance where requested, and in countries where we have presence.

The Oslo Center will continue to play a part in processes towards peace and stability, all over the world. We want to acknowledge and embrace partners and donors that enable the Oslo Center to respond to our shared responsibilities towards the 2030 Agenda and peaceful, democratic societies.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Rode', written over a white background.

Finn Jarle Rode,
Executive Director of
the Oslo Center

OSLO CENTER VISION

A world consisting of stable democracies respecting equality,
human dignity and human rights.

OSLO CENTER MISSION

The Oslo Center is an independent, non-partisan democracy assistance center
that assists the strengthening of democratic political institutions and processes.



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