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The Oslo Center - Annual report

PEACE DEMOCRACY HUMAN RIGHTS



LEAVE NO DEMOCRACY BEHIND

Democracy has gained ground over decades, but in the last few years we have experienced fallbacks in the quality of democracies.

The Oslo Center believes meaningful inclusion in democratic and political processes is key to build sustainable democracies with strong, accountable and inclusive institutions on all levels of governance. Our mission is especially focused on Sustainable Development Goal 16 - to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and the Agenda 2030 in general.

Throughout 2019, the Oslo Center has continued to work for inclusive and stable democracies. We have assisted political parties, institutions and civil society in Kenya, Sri Lanka and Ukraine in promoting inclusive political processes and structures. We have facilitated political dialogues on consensus building and cross-party collaboration, shared comparative knowledge and practical experiences, and contributed to knowledge exchange between similar stakeholders in different contexts.

We strive to maintain the highest possible level of **knowledge and understanding of the context** we work in. In identifying “drivers of and barriers to change” and seeking to “do no harm” it is imperative for us to know and understand the stakeholders and all relevant processes in the environment we are present in.

Local ownership is fundamental to our work, which is why we work through a request-based approach. The Oslo Center assist by sharing knowledge-based options, presenting practical comparative experiences, while simultaneously acknowledging and respecting the rights and

responsibilities of the relevant decision-makers to draw conclusions.

Good timing is central in providing democracy assistance, ensuring that we do the right thing at the right time. In order to secure the highest level of relevance for our activities we are convinced that flexibility and adaptability is crucial for successful processes.

The processes related to our scope of work is as important as the outcome from our work. The Oslo Center believes the synergies between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences creates valuable processes that allows us, and our partners, to build and reflect on **“best practice”** and **“lessons learned”**.



Kjell Ulaque Bondeirf
Executive Chair of
the Oslo Center

WHY DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE MATTERS



Democracy has proven to be the most peaceful form of governance that ensures human rights, development and challenges corruption.

Over the recent years, democracy has faced increasing challenges, despite the fact that the number of democratic countries has increased in many parts of the world. Most prominent is the decrease of democratic quality and trust in political institutions. *The Global State of Democracy 2019* by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) mentions some of the key challenges democracies face today, including restrictions on freedom of expression, weakening constitutional checks on executive authority, and governments intentional limitation of civic space. This ultimately results in democratic backsliding and a deteriorating rule of law, leading to an increasing distrust between people and political institutions. Closing the gap and regaining the trust between citizens and governments are crucial in achieving peace, stability and sustainable development.

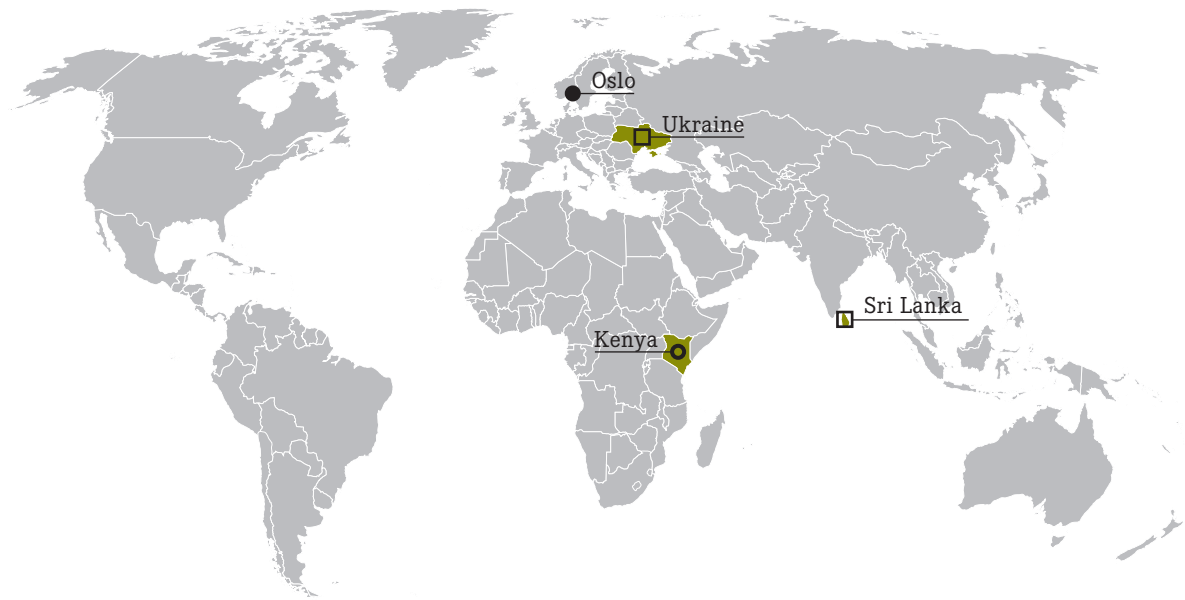
Democracy is more than the right to participate and vote in general elections. The Oslo Center utilizes a broad definition of democratic institutions, referring to the various branches of political power and power sharing, political parties and civil society, as well as the guide-

lines, rules, laws and societal norms that guides a democratic society. It is acknowledged that democracy assistance matters deeply to the 2030 Agenda since it contributes to peace, inclusion, respect for human rights, inclusion of a broad set of voices, and institution-building. Sustainable Development is an international, national and individual responsibility. Strengthening of a country's institutions and political processes is crucial in achieving this. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions' highlights the importance of strong, functioning and inclusive institutions and processes, and is often described as a prerequisite to achieving the rest of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Nordic countries, especially Norway, have decades of experience with democratic development and have an important opportunity and responsibility to promote and contribute to democracy assistance through its aid programs around the world. Strengthening of political institutions and processes in development, contribute directly to reinforce democracy - as an institution, system and value. Democratic governance increases a nations' ownership to the country's development and secures strong and lasting political institutions. Democracy assistance is requested by governments and their institutions all over the world, providing the Oslo Center with a unique and humble opportunity to assist in ensuring viable and peaceful change.

WHERE WE WORK

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



BUILDING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE PROCESSES

The Oslo Center provides technical assistance and support to government institutions, political parties, legislative frameworks and civil society by supporting inclusive and democratic structures and processes in Africa, Asia and Europe.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS TO REINFORCE INCLUSIVE PROCESSES



Supported by the Royal Danish Embassy in Nairobi through the Uraia Trust, the Oslo Center implemented a program that sought to strengthen the capacity of political parties in Kenya to be more inclusive, responsive, transparent and accountable by enhancing internal democratic processes.

The project has two key components, which are to promote inclusive party processes by strengthening the national party secretariat, and to assist political parties to increase constructive youth participation in decision-making. The Oslo Center in 2019 worked with six political parties; Amani National Congress (ANC), Kenya African National Union (KANU), Wiper Democratic Movement-Kenya (WDM-K),

Forum for the Restoration of Democracy - Kenya (Ford-K), Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Jubilee Party (JP). In Kenya, as a direct result of the Oslo Center's engagement, political parties have reorganized the national secretariat structure by developing and operationalizing secretariat documents, developing clear roles and responsibilities of secretariat staff and by strengthening the capacity of the secretariat to professionally conduct party business. Additionally, the Oslo Center has assisted political party youth leagues to reorganize their structures, develop youth leagues rules and regulations that give legal anchoring to youth structures, and developed the capacity of the youth to better contribute in decision making processes and party development.

Supported by Sida through the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi, The Oslo Center is implementing a program that aims to assist parties to operationalize party constitutions, organize county assembly groups, strengthen women league structures and support the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) to increase operational performance, efficiency, representation and accountability. The Oslo Center has worked with political parties to identify ways of strengthening their party constitution and develop operationalization documents. The operationalization of party constitutions promotes transparency and accountability in the party structures and processes. The organization of party caucuses in the county assemblies assists parties with internal consultations and drives party policies that address citizen needs. The strengthening of women structures facilitates women contribution in the decision-making processes and enhances the inclusion of women's views in party processes. The Oslo Center also contributes to the revision of political party

primaries law through its engagement with ORPP and the Taskforce on Review of the Framework for Political Parties Primaries.

In 2019, the Oslo Center also implemented a program, Empowering Women in Politics (EWIP), funded by Sida Sweden through the Kristdemokratiskt Internationellt Center (KIC) in Kenya. The overall objective of the still ongoing EWIP program is to increase the participation and influence of women in politics. EWIP is a regional program that is being implemented in four sub-Saharan African countries, namely Kenya, Uganda, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire. The program targets particularly women active in political parties, including senior management. The program has two components: building the leadership capacity of women and elected officers in a male dominated political environment by addressing gender barriers of participation and by creating more space for women

leadership within the parties. The Oslo Center conducted in 2019 the first training for female members of county assemblies (MCAs) and women leagues members to build their capacity to legislate on county budgets and agendas that addresses the needs of women and men in the county assemblies. Women at individual party level have identified and documented legal and structural impediments to women contribution and leadership in politics that they would raise with party leadership for review and action. As a result of the training, women have also cascaded the training to other counties, lobbied for the allocation of women funds in county budgets and supported the development agenda in the counties specifically targeting the socioeconomic emancipation of women at grass-roots level. In addition, women at county level have established cross - party mechanisms to promote women leadership regardless of party affiliation.

CONSENSUS AND COALITION BUILDING



In 2019, the Oslo Center continued its partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) on a project focused on consensus and coalition building in the Ukrainian Parliament, Verkhovna Rada. With support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kyiv, the project engaged key actors in the parliament through several

activities and trainings. Throughout the project, special focus has been given to the ongoing reform process in Ukraine, where the project partners assist the political parties with tools to overcome political deadlocks and challenges. In November, NDI and the Oslo Center hosted a consensus building training in Kyiv for the faction secretariat staff of the newest convocation of the parliament. The training gave the staff first-hand experience in parliamentary negotiations and consensus building.

The Oslo Center has also continuously supported the Jean Monnet Dialogue process, a mediation and dialogue process initiated by the European Parliament, leading to numerous consensus agreements implemented in the Verkhovna Rada.



In 2019, the Oslo Center in partnership with the Norwegian Christian Democratic Party, finalized a pilot-project with the Parliament of Sri Lanka.

The project, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), focused on strengthening consensus and coalition building in the Parliament. Key activities included a follow-up mission to Colombo led by Executive Chair of the Oslo Center, Kjell Magne Bondevik, and former

Minister of Petroleum and Energy from the Christian Democratic Party, Einar Steensnæs. The mission built on knowledge and lessons learned from the previous year's activities, which included a study visit to Oslo and the Storting. An in-depth workshop was conducted with members of parliament who participated in the visit to Oslo, addressing the continued need for cooperation and collaboration in the parliament across political issues and party lines. Discussions during the visit also touched on ruling coalitions and ways of reaching compromise in challenging political situations.

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY



For several years, the Oslo Center has assisted local initiatives in identifying mechanisms for dialogue, consultations and citizens' engagement through democratic and peaceful means to address grievances and issues of concern. These are seen as alternative mechanisms and constructive platforms of preventing youth from joining radical, violent and extremist groups. 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 Sida and the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi through Diakonia Kenya and AKO Foundation respectively.

MYA is a youth initiative where concerns of the youth are discussed at local village level and recommendations are forwarded to the relevant

local, county and national authorities for action. The proactive youth initiative approach has seen the MYA become a relevant force in the local socio-economic and political discourses at the Coast. The Oslo Center has been working with MYA since 2009. The project has assisted the MYA structure to initiate and reactivate youth and community engagement to identify challenges and solutions affecting them, as well as demand service delivery from duty bearers at local community forums. National policy engagement was also carried out in a constructive way using the parliamentary model.

Following the success of the Mombasa Youth Assembly (MYA) in the county, and the need for further dialogue mechanisms along the Kenyan coast, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi through Diakonia Kenya, is supporting the Oslo Center to facilitate the establishment of Youth Assemblies in neighbouring counties. In 2019 the Oslo Center also initiated the youth assembly establishment processes in Kwale.

School-based Peace Clubs is a Kenyan government initiative in collaboration with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC).



The Oslo Center was invited to assist in the revitalization of this mechanism, providing youth a platform to address local issues and carry out a dialogue. 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 community problem-solving, secure peaceful co-existence and local authority cooperation. Supported by AKO Foundation, the Oslo Center together with Bjørknes University College have supported key people of the Coast to develop a formalized curriculum for the different actors and target groups in the Peace Clubs. The Curriculum for Peace and Development gives a detailed overview on how to put the peace clubs into practice – on several topics within the relevant fields adapted to the local context. The Curriculum will be officially launched at the beginning of 2020, followed by a training program for trainers in the Peace Clubs.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

DEMOCRACY CONFERENCE



In November, the Oslo Center hosted its first Democracy Conference together with the Norwegian youth political parties, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD). The purpose of the two-day conference was to increase the general understanding of democracy assistance among political actors in Norway and gathered relevant actors within the field. The conference initiated discussions on approaches to democracy assistance, reflections on challenges and solutions within democratic development, and sought to exchange and strengthen common efforts in the field.

The first day was dedicated to a workshop on democracy assistance for Norwegian youth political parties, aiming to initiate closer cooperation between the mother parties and youth parties, as well as between the political parties. The workshop focused on building on each other's knowledge and experience with democracy assistance. The second day was an open conference discussing the role of democratic institutions in achieving the 2030 Agenda, the current state of democracy, good solutions and long-term results in democracy assistance, and the Nordic countries' significant role and position to promote, strengthen and support the global state of democracy.

PARIS PEACE FORUM



At the 2019 Paris Peace Forum, the Oslo Center's Youth Assemblies concept was selected by the Paris Peace Forum Scale-Up Committee as one of 10 most promising governance projects. Out of 716 applicants the Oslo Center was chosen to be one of 113 innovative and engaging projects to showcase our work during the annual forum. During the conference the non-partisan, bottom-up and locally anchored Youth Assemblies concept, which was initiated in Mombasa in 2009, was presented. The pitch focused on the unique approach of the Youth Assemblies, presenting the current scale-up efforts on the coast of Kenya and its global potential.

During two full days, Paris Peace Forum hosted 7000 participants from 140 countries, including 33 heads of state. The conference was a unique opportunity to interact with other actors in the governance field, network with potential partners, and showcase the accomplishments of the Mombasa Youth Assembly as a best-practice for a possible scale-up of the Youth Assemblies concept. As a selected scale-up project the Oslo Center will receive mentorship to assist capturing and communicating the innovative concept.

ANNUAL SEMINAR: THE DRIVERS OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE



In May, the Oslo Center hosted its Annual Seminar focusing on the drivers of democratic change and the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 16 “Peace, justice and strong institutions” and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security”. The topic was discussed through a conversation between Dag Inge Ulstein, The Norwegian Minister of International Development, and Martha Karua, former Minister of Justice in Kenya, moderated by journalist Christian Borch. The Norwegian Minister highlighted the importance of strengthening institutions as a key element for democratic change and Norway’s significant role in promoting democratic values internationally. The former Kenyan Minister spoke on the importance of meaningful inclusion in democracy and reflected upon her experiences as a female politician in Kenya. The speakers ignited an important discussion on key aspects of democracy, Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of focusing on women’s role in these processes.

The event gathered the members of the Oslo Center Board of Directors, Board of Trustees and members of the international affairs community and general public. Participants were welcomed to take part in the discussions, which led to a fruitful and interesting conversation.

ARENDALSUKA 2019



During ‘Arendalsuka’ an annual forum for political debate in Norway, the Oslo Center partnered with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Oslo Governance Centre and the Nordic Representation Office to host a timely seminar on “*Rekkeviddeangst*” and Norway’s approach to *multilateral cooperation*.

The seminar reflected on the necessity of cooperation across borders and through multilateral institutions to reach global pressing issues, discussed how increased competition between superpowers, nationalism and populism have an eroding effect on the international system and multilateral cooperation, and how Norway should operate in an international system that seems to be losing its broad support and powerful influence.

Moderated by Senior Research and Policy Advisor at UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Endre Stiansen, the event featured panelists: Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Erik Solheim, former Executive Director of United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Catharina Bu, International Advisor for the Norwegian think tank Agenda, and Espen Barth Eide, former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

POLITICAL PARTY PEER NETWORK

In June 2019, the Political Party Peer Network Conference was held in Helsinki, Finland, and hosted by Political Parties of Finland for Democracy - Demo Finland. The topic of the conference was “Strengthening Political Parties - Ensuring People’s Voice Towards the 2030 Agenda”. All the major Democracy Assistance Providers from the international community attended, and discussed best practices and lessons learned, challenges in the field of democracy assistance and the state of democracy and the need for prioritizing democracy support around the world. The practitioners from the Nordic Countries also met separately and discussed the specific opportunities and challenges related to the Nordic development efforts in general.

EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRACY

The Oslo Center has continued the engagement with the European Partnership for Democracy (EpD) network in Brussels, containing many relevant European democracy assistance organizations and NGOs. The partnership continues to be of great value in our daily work, and the Oslo Center would like to extend our gratitude to EpD for their important task in informing the network of ongoing work and exploring synergies between the organizations. We look forward to future cooperation within the network in 2020.

FUNDING

In 2019, the Oslo Center received project funding from 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, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi through Diakonia, AKO Foundation,

Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida) through Christian Democratic International Center (KIC), 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 that 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 2019 sponsors:

- James Reimer
- Vestre AS
- Good Planet Foundation
- Havila Holding

As of 2019, the Oslo Center has made it possible to contribute with a donation through our website, www.oslocenter.no.

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

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.

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. Turid Leirvoll (Denmark) Party Secretary of Socialist People's Party (SF) in Denmark.

Ms. Elsbeth Sande Tronstad (Norway) Senior Vice President, SN Power

Mr. Knut Vollebæk (Norway) Former Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ms. Julie Christiansen (Norway) Former Member of Parliament.

Ms. Maria Elisabeth Lausund (Norway) Staff representative, Senior Advisor.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees is an advisory board consisting of 42 (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 2019, the Board of Trustees was chaired by the former President of Finland, **H.E. Tarja Halonen**.

GREETINGS FROM THE OSLO CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – THE YEAR AHEAD

Throughout 2019, the Oslo Center has assisted political institutions in their efforts to strengthen inclusive participation and processes, with the end goal of building accountable and sustainable political systems. The Oslo Center has taken all possible opportunities to advocate widely, on building lasting structures and sustainable governance in coherence with SDG 16, both in Norway and on international arenas.

Faced with antiliberal populist movements, increased corruption and break down in rule of law, many countries that democratized after the cold war have regressed. Even long-standing democracies have shifted direction due to populist political forces that are indifferent to basic principles like separation of power and equal treatment of their citizens. The momentum from the expansion of new states and democracies in the 1990 and early 2000 seems to have worn off. Many countries struggle today, in finding their ways into more democratic ways of governance, due to all the detailed debates and political swings followed by these changes. Nations that are still ridden by deep ethnical or class conflicts, economical fragility and instability, face a more challenging journey working towards democratic institution-building and development.

The Oslo Center has been instrumental in working with a close view into all these changes. Today, we focus our work in East Africa with increased interest in Europe and Asia. We strive to be in constant development, to be an organization cooperating and coordinating with international organizations and governments supporting a common goal; sustainable development of nations.

Global leaders are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of discussing and supporting

democratic processes worldwide. It is imminent for every organization and country advocating for SDG 16 to come together and focus our work on what we have committed to; providing leadership, guidance and recommendation for sustainable development to build strong nations. The Oslo Center is focused on doing our part to reach it, in close collaboration with cooperating partners and institutions requesting our assistance.

Together with the team in Oslo and Nairobi, the Oslo Center continues our work to provide key assistance to democratic institutions and processes. Together with local grassroots initiatives, political parties and other stakeholders we can build sustainable structures, that will help developing countries and lessen the divide between governments and their citizens.

The Oslo Center will continue to play a part in processes towards peace and stability, all over the world. We want to acknowledge and thank partners and donors supporting this work, which enables the Oslo Center to respond to our shared responsibilities.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Jarle Rode'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Finn Jarle Rode,
Executive Director of
the Oslo Center



THE OSLO CENTER
Peace • Democracy • Human Rights

THE 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.



THE OSLO CENTER
Peace • Democracy • Human Rights

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