

The background features a dark grey field with a pattern of diagonal lines. Scattered throughout are various sizes of gear icons. One gear in the lower-middle section is highlighted in a bright red color, while all other gears are in shades of grey.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS TOOL

National Democratic Institute

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PREFACE

Political party assistance is undergoing a transition. In recent years, a growing number of implementers have become involved in party assistance, and donors who had previously been reluctant to support these programs have expressed a new interest in the sector. These developments present challenges as well as opportunities. Broader recognition of party development as a critical element of democracy support is long overdue. However, it has been tempered by concerns about poor public perceptions of political parties in both emerging and established democracies, the need to better demonstrate results, and frustration over the slow pace of party reform in many countries. Simply put, while party assistance has greater legitimacy in the democracy support community, there is also increased awareness of, and concern about some of the challenges involved in supporting party reform. At the same time, the increased variety and interest in the party assistance community creates greater opportunities for dialogue regarding emerging trends, lessons learned, and challenges facing the sector. The Political Party Peer Network – an informal network of party assistance providers and donors – is serving as one forum for some of these discussions.

For more than 30 years, NDI has worked with democratic parties in over 90 countries around the world to create more open political environments in which citizens can actively participate in the democratic process. While party assistance has always been at the core of its mandate, over the years the Institute has adapted the assistance it provides based on new trends in party organizing, shifting political landscapes, the needs of its partners, and an ever increasing body of knowledge and expertise. Today, more complex programs, increasingly diverse operating contexts and approaches, and the quest to improve monitoring and evaluation require assistance providers to update the tools and frameworks they once used to design and evaluate their work. Similar efforts are underway across various sectors in international development.

The Will, Space, Capacity Framework is part of NDI's efforts to meet the challenges of a new era in party assistance. The framework is designed to help donors, assistance providers and evaluators consider how formal and informal rules and institutions, the general political environment, and other factors influence political will and opportunities for party reform in different contexts. This has implications for how theories of change are framed, program strategies are developed, expectations are set about the likely pace and type of reforms in different operating environments, and program successes and shortcomings are analyzed. While the framework does not offer instant solutions to the various complexities of party assistance, it should help readers gain new insights into the obstacles to and possible approaches for supporting the development of more effective and inclusive parties.

The Institute is grateful to those who helped bring the framework to fruition.

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CONTEXT ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, questions have arisen about how party assistance can be better tailored to different operating contexts, address or take into greater account some of the underlying factors that shape party behavior, and be more effectively monitored and evaluated. More complex programs, increasingly diverse operating contexts, and the quest for improved monitoring and evaluation require assistance providers to update the tools and frameworks they use to design and evaluate their work. This context analysis tool, developed as a companion to the [Political Party Programming Guide](#), is designed to help meet that challenge. It is primarily intended for use by assistance providers and others who may be involved in context analyses for party support. While some types of assessments focus on identifying the key characteristics of a party system or the individual parties operating within it, this tool outlines a broader approach. It prompts users to not only consider how parties in a given environment behave but also urges them to examine the underlying factors that influence party functioning. Through a broader analysis of their operating context, users should be better placed to understand the root causes of democratic deficits in parties and the party system as a whole, identify more strategic interventions, and establish more realistic outcomes for programs.

This tool is grounded in the Will, Space, Capacity Framework outlined in the [Political Party Programming Guide](#). In addition, as Textbox 1 illustrates, it draws upon a number of existing tools and approaches, including Drivers of Change, Power Analysis, the [Political Party Assessment Tool](#), and political economy analysis. Recognizing that assistance providers operate under varying conditions, it outlines three different options for implementation. Based on the human resources, time, and funding available, users can choose one or more of the following: a desk study; limited key informant interviews; and more comprehensive interviews to collect the information required to analyze the operating context. In addition, it outlines general questions for use in identifying and prioritizing democracy deficits, as well as more detailed issues that should be considered when examining the underlying causes of identified democracy problems. Thus the tool can accommodate two types of programming situations: instances in which specific problems have yet to be identified, and those in which a particular problem has already been selected as the focus of an intervention.

This context analysis tool is not intended as a framework to be rigidly applied across all country contexts. Instead, it provides a basis for political economy analysis by outlining example questions that can and should be modified on a case by case basis. However, it attempts to adhere to the following key principles that should be applicable in any situation:

1. The motivations, interests and incentives that influence various political actors, as well as the political, historical and economic institutions that affect how politics is done, are all critical to the understanding of any context and how change occurs within it;
2. One of the best ways to source this information is through multiple in-depth conversations (semi-structured interviews) with people who have first hand, unparalleled knowledge of the context (i.e., local political actors and activists), adhering to ethical principles of good research; and



3. Party programming can be better informed and more effective as a result of collecting and analyzing this information at the planning stage.

The remaining sections of this tool provide an overview of the Will, Space, Capacity Framework, describe the types of information needed for context analysis, outline suggested methods for collecting the information outlined in the framework, and provide tips for analyzing the data gathered. The [Political Party Programming Guide](#), the companion to this tool, provides additional details on the Will, Space, Capacity Framework and how to use it in designing and managing party programs.

Textbox 1: How This Tool Builds on Existing Approaches

Power Analysis: Primarily used by the Swedish International Development Agency, power analysis emphasizes “the links between human rights, democracy and poverty reduction; formal versus informal institutions and agents, and the importance of process.”¹ It is designed to help donors identify strategies for intervention that take into account political considerations and the interests of elites, rather than focusing solely on technical needs and solutions. Adapted for political party programming, this includes examining a combination of formal and informal processes and how they impact political behavior. For instance, examining whether formal, constitutionally-guaranteed human rights increase the ability and willingness among women and/or other marginalized groups to participate in political processes and if not, why not, could reveal information about the strength of informal norms and institutions that have a greater effect on marginalized groups than constitutional provisions.

Drivers of Change: Pioneered by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, this approach emphasizes understanding political contexts in order to identify how change occurs in a given environment and which actors facilitate this change based on structural and institutional conditions. Applied to party programming, this includes examining the political, social and economic contexts in which parties operate, with a particular focus on structural and institutional conditions. This can lead to a better understanding of how change might occur and inform more targeted programming.

Political Party Assessment Tool: Developed under a grant from the United States Agency for International Development, this detailed set of guidelines recommends that a team of specialists conduct preparatory desk studies and in-country interviews to examine the political environment in a given country. This tool draws upon some of the same principles, but outlines a more condensed approach and links it to the Will, Space, Capacity Framework outlined in this publication and the [Political Party Programming Guide](#).

THE WILL, SPACE, CAPACITY FRAMEWORK

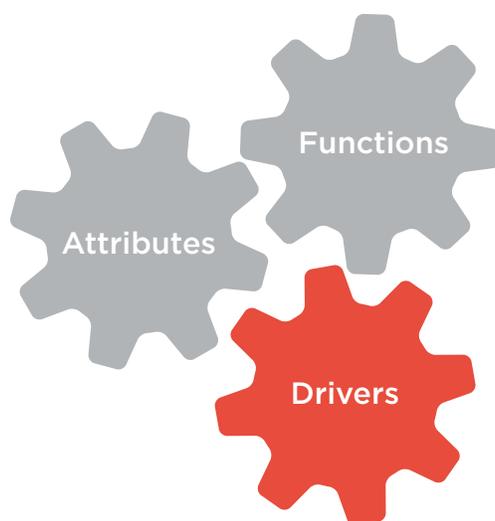
In democratic systems, the primary role of a political party is to aggregate and represent citizen interests. A range of local factors – such as social norms, history, and individual incentives – influence how parties interpret this role and what citizens expect of them. The framework outlined below focuses on the key functions through which political parties fulfill their representative role. Rather than putting forward a rigid set of criteria or benchmarks for party functioning, it outlines core principles and competencies that parties require in order to effectively perform their representative functions. Thus, it is flexible enough to be applied

1. Helena Bjuremalm. *Power Analysis: Experiences and Challenges*. (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Agency, 2006), 5.



in diverse environments and to political parties of varying size, ideology, membership base, and age. In addition, it incorporates contextual factors and key drivers that influence party behavior.

Figure 1: The Will, Space, Capacity Framework



The framework shown in Figure 1 has three levels that build on one another. They include:

- The functions – proposing policies, competing in elections, and governing – that parties should perform in democratic systems;
- The attributes, including competencies (technical skills and resources) and principles (values) that parties require in order to effectively fulfill their functions; and
- Three key influences or drivers – political space, political will, and capacity – that shape party behavior.

Ideally, parties perform their functions with the aim of representing the interests of their constituencies. The extent to which they play their representative role is based on their commitment to democratic principles and their access to technical skills and resources. The drivers outline the underlying factors that cause parties to behave the way they do. Loosely, these three concepts – functions, attributes and drivers – relate to what parties do, how they do it, and why they behave the way they do.

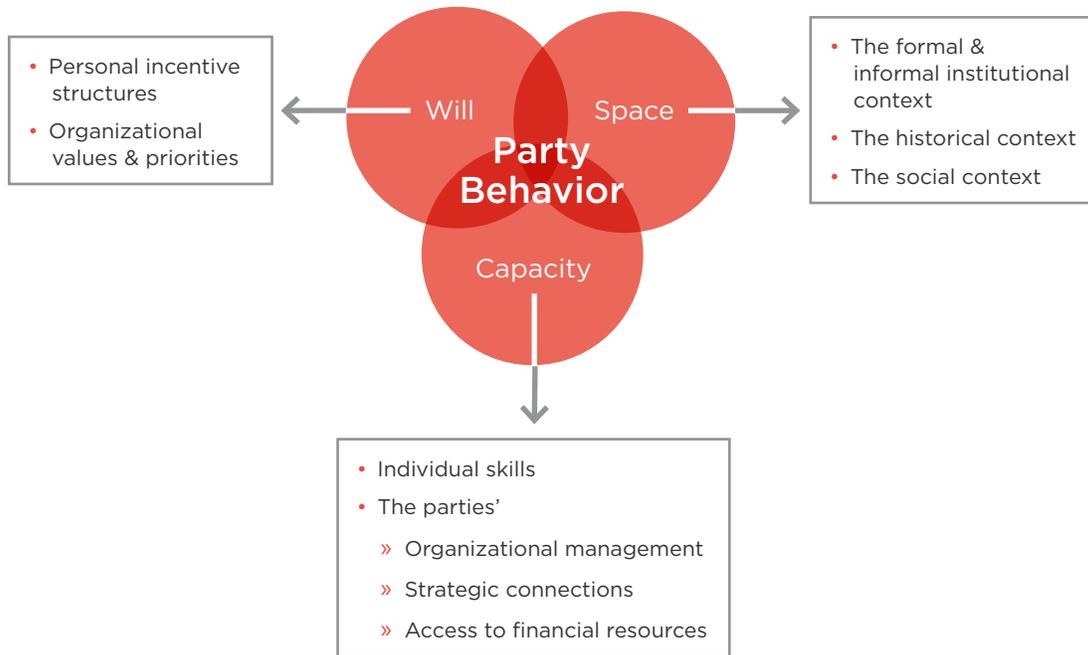
WHAT INFORMATION IS NEEDED AND WHY?

An important first step in designing a program strategy is to develop an understanding of the operating context. This involves examining the overall political environment in a given country, identifying the main democratic deficits in its parties and party system, and determining the underlying factors or drivers that shape party behavior.



The Will, Space, Capacity Framework outlined above – and described in greater detail in the [Political Party Programming Guide](#) – shows that several factors influence how political parties interpret and fulfill their representative role. These drivers can be grouped under three headings: political space, political will, and capacity. Political space describes the environment parties operate in and how they interact with it. Political will refers to the incentives that influence both political parties and the individual actors within them. Finally, capacity refers to the nuts and bolts of party organizing and activity. Figure 2 outlines how each of these categories breaks down further. It also recognizes significant overlap between the three.

Figure 2: Components of Will, Space and Capacity



This tool suggests that by collecting and analyzing the kind of information detailed in Figure 2, and further highlighted in Appendix 1, assistance providers will have a better understanding of why party systems and parties behave the way they do in a given country context. Conducting such a context analysis prior to program design should help practitioners develop a more nuanced understanding of the causes of democratic weaknesses in a given context and potential risks to program strategies, allowing for more effective interventions. These categories of information are not exhaustive and can be altered according to the requirements of different country contexts. However, given the importance of developing a broad picture of the political environment, all categories should be included in an analysis of any context. While users may consider focusing on those categories they consider the most important, this runs the risk of imposing preconceived – and not necessarily accurate – notions about what is ‘important’ onto the analysis before it is underway.

Different teams face various scenarios, not only in the timeframes available to them for conducting context analyses but also in the starting points for their analyses. Ideally, all context analyses would begin with a blank slate so that a broad picture of the political environment can be developed. In this case, assistance providers would start with an examination of the wider political context; among other things, they would examine to what extent parties propose policies, compete in elections, and contribute to governance. Second, they would move on to assess the ways in which parties are organized and their commitment to democratic values. (The [Political Party Programming Guide](#) provides additional information on these issues.) At some

point during these two steps, key deficits in party activities and/or the party system would likely emerge. Having identified these problems, they would then begin a third step of deeper analysis, examining their root causes – the drivers of party behavior, which often constitute questions of political will, political space, or capacity.

However, assistance providers may be tasked with addressing a particular pre-defined problem or deficit, such as the paucity of women in party leadership. In this instance, analysis would begin at the third step, taking the defined problem and examining its root causes through the Will, Space, Capacity Framework. The sections below provide additional information on data collection and analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

Suggested Research Methods

This section outlines three suggested methods for collecting the information described above. For teams with limited time or resources, it proposes a desk study. Where time and other resources permit, it recommends working with targeted key informants or conducting more extensive interviews in addition to the desk study. Alternatively, teams could begin with the desk study and then supplement the information with interviews, once time and other resources allow. Each approach is outlined in greater detail below. No context is ever static and context analyses should ideally be updated on a regular basis. One option for ensuring that analyses remain valid would be to conduct follow-on key informant interviews at six month, annual, or other appropriate intervals.

In all three approaches, a small number of parties will need to be chosen as subjects for analysis. This sample should include parties that represent most, if not all, key interest groups in the country in question. Program teams could compile a comprehensive list of political parties, group them into categories relevant to the context (e.g., geographic/ethnic, ideological) and then choose a sample – ideally between 6 and 12 – that reflects the various main schisms in the country.² However, the sample of parties examined during the context analysis will not necessarily correspond to those eventually selected for assistance, and must be considered a representative sample of the political context rather than a list of potential future partners. As outlined in the [Political Party Programming Guide](#), once the context analysis has been conducted, it can be used alongside existing organizational guidelines to determine which parties to work with in a given country.

Desk Study

Ideally – but not necessarily – the desk study should be carried out in-country. This should make it easier to draw upon the perspectives of local staff; where they exist, they are a valuable source of both institutional memory and contextual understanding. The study could draw upon secondary sources, such as:

- Party documentation;
- Country constitutions and electoral laws;
- Freedom House Freedom in the World reports;
- Human Rights Watch reports;
- Transparency International reports, including the Corruption Perceptions Index;

2. For an example of guidance on selecting parties, consult Scott Morgenstern and Andrew Green. *Political Party Assessment Tool*. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2011), 9.



- Amnesty International reports;
- International Crisis Group reports;
- The World Bank's World Development Indicators;
- The Human Development Index;
- The Gender Inequality Index;
- International Parliamentary Union (IPU) reports;
- Local and international media sources; and
- Country analyses by organizations such as International IDEA and NIMD, where these are available.

In some cases, country experts in the academic, diplomatic, development or other communities may be willing and available to share their perspectives via phone, Skype or other means. However, in general, conversations with individuals directly involved in politics are best conducted through face to face interviews, during which it is easier to establish a rapport, discuss sensitive issues, and read body language.

Key Informant Interviews

These interviews should be conducted with up to 20 key informants, including party leaders or high level party officials; rank and file party members; legislative staff; representatives of the body responsible for registering parties; staff members from elections watchdog or other democracy-promoting CSOs or think tanks; and representatives of other international democracy-promoting agencies, such as IFES, IRI or the German Stiftungen. Table 1 outlines an illustrative sampling guide for approximately 20 interviews.

Table 1: Sampling Guide for Key Informant Interviews

Respondent	Number of interviews
Party leaders/high level officials	6
Rank and file members (ideally representing diverse groups, especially those from marginalized communities, e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBT individuals)	5
Parliamentary/legislative staff	1
Party registration body	1
Elections watchdog/democracy CSO	1
International democracy-promoting agency	1

The illustrative samples in Tables 1 and 2 do not include all party leaders or members of each party to be studied. Qualitative interviews with even a small number of party respondents, conducted well, will likely provide critical information that may not be available through secondary material. For example, a member may describe dissatisfaction with their party's decisionmaking processes and give details about the root of the problem; likewise, a senior official may complain about the leader's personalization of the party and lack of delegation of key responsibilities to senior staff. While rank and file members ordinarily might not be considered 'key informants' in a rapid assessment of this kind, here, their contribution is crucial: they will

be able to indicate opinions about the party leadership's relationship with ordinary people, and hint at the incentive structures that determine how the party is run.

Expanded Interviews

This approach could include up to 110 interviews with a broad spectrum of party representatives, government officials, parliamentarians, think tanks, CSOs, and international donors. This would provide a much more comprehensive picture of the political environment than the desk study or key informant interviews outlined above. Table 2 provides an illustrative sampling guide for this level of interviews.

Table 2: Sampling Guide for Expanded Interviews

Respondent	Approximate number of interviews
Party leaders/high level officials at national level	12-24
Rank and file members in the country's capital (representing diverse groups, especially those from marginalized communities, e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBT individuals)	18-36
Party officials in regions	6-12
Rank and file members in regions (representing diverse groups, especially those from marginalized communities, e.g., women, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBT individuals)	12-24
Parliamentary/legislative staff	3
Party registration body	1
CSOs (elections watchdog/democracy, marginalized groups, service delivery/issue-based)	2
International democracy-promoting agency	3
International donor agency	3-5

This sample provides a much broader range of respondents within parties both at the headquarters level and in regional offices, allowing analysts to gather data about the nature of parties' connections with regional support bases. A cross-section of respondents from within parties should be selected, representing different levels of authority and commitment to party activities. Where they exist, field offices may already have a comprehensive network of contacts within parties, and these may be drawn upon either as respondents themselves or as people who might suggest other respondents. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that at least half of the respondents representing each party have had no previous involvement with the organization conducting or commissioning the context analysis. Often, interesting comparisons can be made between the information provided by former program participants, for example, and those who have had no prior contact with the organization.

In addition to including party representatives with varying levels of seniority, different social groups should be represented in the sample. While some parties in certain contexts are ethnically homogenous and involve very few women, ideally, the sample for each party should be as diverse as possible in order to capture the views of women, men, a variety of age brackets, various ethnicities, and different marginalized groups.

The differentiation between rank and file members based in country capitals and those in regions also allows for potential disaggregation of data along urban/rural or urban/semi-urban

lines – a distinction important in countries where, for example, education and other services are concentrated in the center. Finally, the addition of donor respondents here adds an international perspective: donors often conduct detailed assessments of the political environment themselves and may be able to shed light on their understanding of how politics works in the country. This will also enable a useful comparison of how donors view themselves and their work in the country, and how their presence and contributions are viewed by those receiving assistance.

For both the key informant interviews and the more extensive qualitative research, semi-structured interviews are recommended. These are conversational interviews guided by themes but not strictly conforming to a set of questions. As a result, they are based on interview guides that – unlike structured questionnaires – allow the respondent to determine, to some extent, the content of the interview. Within semi-structured interviews, questions often begin in a very general manner – for example, “Please describe how you first decided to get involved in politics” or “Tell me about your role in the New Democratic Party.” While these can be followed by ‘probes’ to help steer the conversation, it is very much left to the respondent to determine what information is given. This facilitates a more in-depth examination of political issues and opinions that could be missed by a simple questionnaire or structured format. It also allows the researcher to examine interview transcripts and determine a respondent’s priorities or key concerns, which may be referred to without prompting or guidance from the researcher. Allowing the respondent to express these concerns of his or her own accord, rather than in response to a set of prescribed questions that may be influenced by the researcher’s preconceptions, is likely to reflect the views of the respondent more accurately. While group interviews can also be conducted using this method, transcription becomes more complicated in a group setting and the dynamics of the interview can change. For example, those who may have spoken up in an individual interview may be dominated by more senior party officials present in a group setting and remain silent. For these reasons, individual interviews are more suitable for this type of analysis. (A sample interview guide is included in Appendix 2. In addition, Textbox 2 outlines some basic tips for qualitative interviews.)

In any given interview, ideally, there should be no more than three people present: the respondent, the researcher and a note-taker/translator. The researcher should take the lead in asking questions and should take notes when possible. The note-taker/translator should also take notes as far as possible, although this will depend very much on whether he or she is in fact translating or is simply taking notes. In an ideal scenario, where the researcher is fluent in a local language, the note-taker can focus solely on capturing as much of the interview in writing as possible. Notes should be transcribed as soon after the interview as possible. This method, avoiding any kind of recording device, often allows respondents to feel more comfortable giving detailed information on what can be sensitive political issues – for example, ethnicity. On a practical note, it also makes the process of transcription shorter and easier, as transcribing from tape recordings can be laborious. If a recording device is used, however, it is paramount that the respondent’s consent for its use is given before the interview begins – over and above the consent they have given for the interview itself to take place.



Textbox 2: Basic Tips for Qualitative Interviews

Conducting conversational interviews that generate useful data is not necessarily as straightforward as it sounds, particularly given that respondents are largely able to define the topics of conversation themselves. Nevertheless, a few guiding principles can ensure that an interview is well managed.

1. Adapt your approach to the cultural context

Cultural factors may influence how meetings are scheduled, how interviewers and questions are perceived, who participates in the conversation, and how the conversation unfolds. Consider the cultural context, including issues of hierarchy, gender, communication styles, and other factors, and adapt your approach accordingly. This may involve thinking through relatively simple adjustments – dress codes, for example – as well as more difficult issues surrounding the potential composition of the interview team.

2. Use open-ended rather than closed questions

Because the aim is to elicit as long and detailed a response as possible, questions that invite a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response are not helpful in conversational interviews. Questions beginning with “how,” “please describe,” or “tell me about” often lead to much more in-depth answers.

3. Avoid leading questions

There is little point in trying to coax a particular answer out of a respondent, if the aim is truly to solicit his or her opinion. Avoid asking questions that already have an answer implied, such as, “Do you think the recent reforms to party law will really change things on the ground for parties?”

4. If a respondent struggles to answer an open-ended question, follow up with ‘probes’

Ideally, an open-ended question such as, “Please describe the current political system” will lead to a detailed answer with all the information you need, demonstrating the respondent’s priorities and immediate choices of what to say. If he or she struggles, talk about tangential issues or follow up with probes – short prompts that guide the respondent in the rough direction of the themes you want to follow. Following the example above, a probe might be, “Tell me about the electoral law in particular,” or something similar. The interview guide below gives further examples of probes.

5. Avoid the temptation to add your own observations and thoughts

While there are places for these in other kinds of interviews, qualitative interviews generally do not include references to the researcher’s own opinions. The aim by the end of the interview is to have gained a solid grasp of the respondent’s perspective; whether or not it is ‘right’ is less important.

Organizing the Data Collection Process

This section describes a two-step process for gathering the information outlined in Figure 2 above. In addition, based on the concepts outlined in steps 1 and 2 below, Appendix 1 provides a framework of research questions that could be considered during desk research or examined during semi-structured interviews. A sample interview guide is included in Appendix 2. As a reminder, depending on the time, travel budget, and staff resources available, analysts may choose to conduct desk research alone or to combine it with limited or expanded semi-structured interviews.



Understandably, desktop information will be more readily available for some countries than others. Further, it is always important to consider a combination of perspectives in order to reach balanced conclusions. For some countries – especially those where freedoms of expression and organization are curtailed – it is likely to be more difficult to find balanced or detailed sources through desktop research. Special efforts may be required to round out the information. For purposes of analysis, the perspectives of those whose views align with the research team and those that diverge are equally valuable. Moreover, depending on the operating context, some lines of inquiry will prove more fruitful than others. For instance, in situations where political parties are just emerging, party structures are likely to be loosely defined. As such, it is likely to be difficult (and possibly less relevant) to pursue detailed information about those systems and processes.

Step 1: Gathering Basic Contextual Information

Assuming limited previous knowledge of a given country, analysis should begin with the compilation of basic information about the formal institutional framework, historic trends in state-citizen interactions, social legacies, and institutional incentive structures. Most of this information is likely to be found in secondary resources with relative ease. More specifically, this includes:

Formal institutional context: Political system, electoral system, legal framework (including the constitution and party law), parliamentary rules of procedure, judicial system, interparty relations, civil society organizations and activity, political calendar, media freedoms. Who makes the de jure rules of the game?

Historical events, trends and patterns in state-citizen interactions: Prevalence of peaceful protests, other forms of nonviolent contestation, taxation as a proportion of GDP, conscription, civil war. What role, if any, have parties played in these interactions? At what points and how or why has political change occurred in the past? How might the context change in the next 20 years?

Social legacies: Ethnic tensions, security environment, prevailing gender norms, marginalization of certain social groups, regional differentiation in terms of citizen rights and duties.

Step 2: Collecting Information on Party Behavior and Other Contextual Factors

In the second step, additional information should be collected on party functioning as well as other factors that could influence party behavior. The level of information available through secondary resources will vary from one country to another. In instances where interviews are conducted, the material gathered in step 1 and the early stages of step 2 can help inform briefing materials for the interview team. In some cases, analysts may note differences between their own conclusions derived from desk research and the points raised by respondents. This will provide some indication of respondents' priorities and interests. Data collection at this stage includes information on the informal institutional context, incentive structures that affect party leaders' decision making, as well as party rules and practices in such areas as policy development, leadership selection, and access to resources. Additional information is provided below.

Informal institutional context: Prevalence of patron-client networks, uniformity of law enforcement, historical patterns of party decision making (i.e., leadership control), party activity within parliament, interparty relationships now and over time. Who makes the de facto rules of the game?

Individual values and interests: What affects party leaders' or key actors' decision-making processes? To what extent are they committed to reform and why? What motivates them and other party members to be involved in programming – questions of ambition, standing within the party, personal policy interests, allegiance to key interest groups, perks of the training itself



(e.g., per diems, where these are paid)? What motivates leaders and members to be involved in politics in general?

Organizational priorities and values: Party ideology and interests. How does the party define the constituencies whose interests it hopes to serve? What political principles does it stand for?

Internal functioning/accountability: How a party is run. Who has control of party finances, where does the money come from, and what impact does this have on how decisions are made? How are party leaders (e.g., the secretary general) selected? Levels of internal accountability – to what extent are rank and file members informed of or able to participate in party decisions? To what extent are party executives and mid-level officials able to influence party decisions, how are these executives selected, and how are internal elections for leadership positions conducted? What is the party’s relationship with members and how does it seek to assure its relevance based on member interests, if at all? What is the frequency of party conferences or congresses and who is invited? What is the role played by the party’s parliamentary members within party functions, and how are the party’s electoral candidates selected?

Policy/platform development: How are policies/platforms determined? What are the main influencing factors? What about the policy-making process as an indicator of will – how does the process seek to canvass public or constituent opinion, if at all?

Formal organization: Internal structures, management, institutional frameworks, levels of capacity of individual members and of various party officials as a whole (e.g., for information gathering, platforms, legislation, know-how, strategy, policy).

History of political influence: Where and how have various parties made a difference in the political environment in the past, and how does this impact their perceived confidence and capacity to do so again?

Strategic connections: How are different parties placed in terms of their access to influential people? Consider party relationships with civil society/trade unions, the military, the business community, etc. These could be in the form of patron-client relationships or could include the ability to mobilize support, but might also simply be described as knowing people in high places, having access to information flows, or being well placed to respond to issues in a timely manner.

Access to resources: To what extent are parties able to finance their activities through membership fees, individual donors, and government assistance? Sustainability of these sources of funding, capacity within the party to manage funds effectively.

Training: Is the next generation of leaders given encouragement and training, or are they seen as a threat?

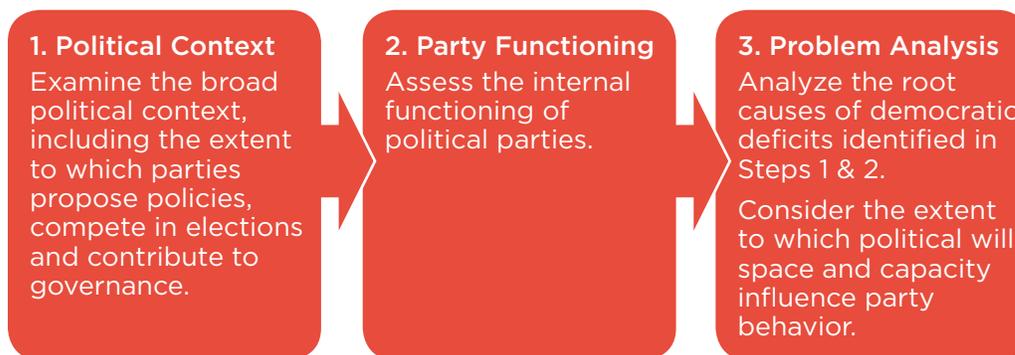
Party relationship with assistance provider: Have party members had any previous engagement or previous training with the assistance provider? What does their previous experience imply for their likelihood of working with the assistance provider again and their interest in programs? What about attitudes toward donors? What about other practitioner agencies working in the same field? What are the levels of coordination? Historical/current relationship with and views of the U.S.: how does this affect perceptions of the assistance provider?

Once information has been gathered – either through the desk study alone, or through a combination of the desk study and interviews – the data should be analyzed in order to draw conclusions about the context and the implications for programming. Here, the focus is primarily on drawing conclusions from the data through the three-step process outlined in “What Information is Needed and Why” and summarized in Figure 3. The [Political Party Programming Guide](#) provides additional information on program design.



DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 3: Context Analysis



Textbox 3: Party Systems and Cross-cutting Themes

Authoritarian/Semi-Authoritarian: Political parties face significant formal and/or informal restrictions on their operations, including but not limited to unreasonably high thresholds for registration, and intimidation or harassment of party officials and activists and their partners (including assistance providers). Elections – if they do occur – repeatedly feature widespread fraud and produce overwhelmingly large majorities for the ruling party or incumbent president. Additional democracy deficits may include formal and informal restrictions on freedom of expression, association and movement, including major limits on press freedoms.

Single Party Dominant: Political parties face no significant formal and/or informal restrictions on their operations and a wide range of democratic freedoms are generally observed. But even in the absence of significant fraud, elections repeatedly return the same party to power and there is little prospect of another party forming government in the near to medium-term future. Due to the overwhelming majority held by the ruling party, opposition parties rarely have enough influence to hold the government to account.

Multiparty Competitive: Elections are frequently competitive, with some history or short to medium-term prospect of power transitioning from one party to another. Depending on the context, there may be two or more major parties and a number of medium or smaller parties that contest elections and shape political discourse. A range of freedoms – including association and expression – are observed, allowing citizens to access information about different political parties and leaders.

Fragile: The political landscape may be characterized by multiple parties with highly volatile bases of support. Party splits may be common and leaders may frequently reinvent themselves under new party names. There may be significant and unresolved questions over major framework issues, including the electoral system and how parties should be regulated. These environments are also marked by uncertainty about the party system and include backsliding or breakthrough contexts.



Conflict/Conflict-Prone: Due to high levels of polarization or conflict – either recent or historical – there is a significant risk of a breakout or resumption of violence. This may be limited to particular parts of the country or the pattern may be geographically diverse.

Political Parties Play Peripheral Roles in Governance: Political parties are allowed to operate to some extent but only play peripheral roles in political processes. The center of power for may lie with the military, a royal family, or another structure or institution.

Step 1: Political Context

The first step in processing the data is to describe the general political context, including the extent to which parties are performing their key functions: competing in elections, proposing policies, and contributing to governance. Different country contexts have various characteristics that define their party systems. These features affect how parties behave and influence options for party assistance. It may be helpful to first identify how the party system in the country in question could be categorized. While there are many ways of categorizing party systems, for the purposes of this tool, the following loose categories may be helpful in identifying systems that exhibit certain similarities: authoritarian/semi-authoritarian; single party dominant; and multiparty competitive. In addition to these categories, three cross-cutting themes may be helpful: fragile, conflict/conflict-prone and political parties play peripheral roles in governance. Textbox 4 provides further information on each of these categories. In addition, the [Political Party Programming Guide](#) outlines common challenges and possible strategies in each of these environments.

Based on the data gathered:

- What is the general political environment and what roles do parties play in politics?
- To what extent are interparty relations and relationships between political parties and other state institutions or actors conducive to democratic governance?
- What are the most significant weaknesses in the party system and what common challenges do parties face?

If problems in the party system exist or are perceived to exist, they will arise at this stage in the analysis. Problems internal to parties themselves will likely surface later.

Step 2: Party Functioning

The following questions may be helpful in assessing the data gathered.

To what extent do political parties:

- Propose policies that are representative of their members' interests?
- Have mechanisms that allow members or supporters to hold their leaders to account?
- Provide opportunities for member/supporter participation in party decision-making processes?



To what extent do individual parties have:

- The rules and systems in place for sustaining an organization?
- The organizational structures, systems and skills in place to conduct outreach and campaign effectively?
- The expertise required to research and formulate policy proposals?

This analysis will lead to more detailed conclusions about specific weaknesses in each of the areas identified above, some of the underlying causes, and possible implications for programming. For example, if a number of branch-level respondents within a party talk about the lack of information available to them about party activities at headquarters level, then it will be necessary to explore the reasons for this weak connection (as given by respondents and as found through secondary data). Similarly, if there are structural issues with the party system that are preventing parties from acting cohesively in parliament, it is important to identify the reasons for the persistence of these problems.

Step 3: Problem Analysis

The final step of the analysis involves using the data gathered to examine the root causes of democratic deficits identified during steps 1 and 2. It suggests that they are likely to be the product of problems with political will, political space, and/or party capacity. It will be necessary at this point to incorporate problem analysis to determine which of these three categories appears to be the source of the problem identified. (See the [Political Party Programming Guide](#) for additional information on problem analysis.) The following questions may help categorize the roots of the problem.

Questions for Assessing Political Space

To what extent is the problem caused by environmental factors? Consider the following:

- What formal rules govern and influence party behavior? These may include the electoral system, legal and constitutional provisions, and parliamentary rules.
- How does the political calendar, including factors like election frequency, conventions, or other political timetables, impact party behavior?
- What informal rules or customs influence party behavior? For instance, is there a history of patronage or clientelism? Do tribal, religious, or other traditional power structures play significant roles in national or regional politics?
- What is the current security environment and how does it affect parties?
- What are the prevailing gender norms and attitudes toward religion? Are there historic ethnic or regional tensions, and what is their current state?



Questions for Assessing Political Will

To what extent is the problem caused by a lack of political will? Consider the following:

- What motivates influential party actors? Are they primarily driven by:
 - » Financial ambitions;
 - » A desire to advance within party structures and build their personal influence; or
 - » Ideological or specific policy interests?
- Who controls party decision making and finances, and what does this say about the party's organizational culture, including its values and priorities? For instance:
 - » To what extent are mid-level officials, and rank and file party members, able to participate in party decisions?
 - » How are party policies and platforms developed and approved?
 - » How and with what frequency are party leaders and candidates selected?

Questions for Assessing Party Capacity

To what extent is the problem caused by a lack of capacity? More specifically:

- Do elected officials, party staff, and activists understand their roles and have skills in such areas as outreach and policy development?
- Does the party have effective internal communications structures, organizational and member management, and policies?
- Are parties state funded, and if so, how are those funds allocated? Are there any restrictions on a party's ability to raise funds?
- How is the party placed in terms of access to information and influential groups and individuals?

It may be the case that the problem is linked to both space and will, or will and capacity – the categories are not mutually exclusive. But in linking the problems to these categories, it will be possible to identify different implications for programming that can be targeted specifically to deficits in space, will or capacity. Table 3 outlines some examples of how different problems might be categorized. It illustrates how the type of analysis described here can help inform programming, but does not provide specific programming solutions to the problems identified, as these will vary depending on a wide range of factors.



Table 3: Problem Analysis

Root Causes/Contributing Factors	Implications for Programming
Problem: Weak party outreach to branches or limited investment in branch development.	
<p>Will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership not interested in rural views (stated in x number of interviews with provincial party representatives). • Historical rift between center and periphery/urban-rural divide on levels of education, access to services, etc., perhaps due to centralized government (desk research). 	<p>Consider strategies making the case to party leaders that investing in grassroots outreach is worthwhile. Leadership needs to be made aware through credible means (e.g., public opinion research) that the grassroots support base is waning and there may be advantages to including grassroots views in decision making processes.</p>
<p>Space/Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distances too great or funds unavailable to make visits (stated in x number of interviews with party officials). • Lack of government spending on infrastructure makes communication difficult (desk research). 	<p>Emphasize low-cost, sustainable ways for parties to hold events and conduct outreach outside the capital.</p>
<p>Capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak use of technology (stated in x number of interviews with key actors). • Center-periphery divide in technological resources and training (desk research). 	<p>Providing technology training to headquarters staff could be useful, but building capacity at the grassroots level may be more critical.</p>
<p>Will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political will is lacking as leaders attain positions through patronage and do not feel they need rural support bases (stated in x number of interviews with key actors). • Social legacies of exclusive patronage networks, no history of democratic governance. 	<p>Programs to promote internal party reform should incorporate strategies to increase/shift leaders' will for reform.</p>
Problem: Legislative activity is fluid and unpredictable; party activity in parliament is fragmented or disorganized.	
<p>Space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most parliamentarians avoid declaring party allegiances in order to trade party support for benefits or cash (stated in x number of interviews with key actors). • Candidates for parliamentary elections are not required to stand as party representatives; parliamentary rules of procedure do not encourage internal organization/groupings. 	<p>Given the limited incentives for parliamentarians to join and commit to parties, consider options that could shift incentive structures or help parties make themselves more attractive to legislators.</p>



Root Causes/Contributing Factors	Implications for Programming
Problem: Legislative activity is fluid and unpredictable; party activity in parliament is fragmented or disorganized.	
Capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parties do not have the resources to keep parliamentarians interested (stated in x number of interviews with key actors). Very few parties have access to sustainable funding sources, e.g., membership fees (desk research). 	<p>Work with parties to develop capacities and strategies (e.g., knowledge and information, strategic relationships) that could make them more attractive to parliamentarians.</p> <p>Engage parties in fundraising, volunteer management, and party finance reforms.</p>
Space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parties do not have much public support after legacies of war (stated in x number of interviews with key actors). Parties have been involved in significant conflict that has occurred within living memory (desk research). 	<p>Consider work with parties and citizens to improve both the understanding of party roles in a democracy and a parties' public image. However, note that negative perceptions of parties may be hard to change.</p>
Space/Will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government is interested in keeping parliament disorganized (stated in x number of interviews with key actors). Parliament is less able to provide checks and balances on government activity if disorganized, cannot form 2/3 majority to overturn presidential decrees (desk research). 	<p>A weak party system is probably the result of broader structural issues in the government (e.g., centralization of power in the executive). Efforts to strengthen parties or parliamentary organization are likely to face significant challenges and the pace of reform is likely to be slower than in other environments.</p>

In terms of formatting findings into a useful report that can inform programming, options include narrative reports, presenting key findings in a tabular form (perhaps using the example of Table 3 as a guide), or using the problem tree approach outlined in the [Political Party Programming Guide](#).

As part of program design, staff should then identify possible strategies for addressing root causes that may be categorized as issues of political will, space or capacity. Of these, the space and capacity categories are likely to be the most straightforward; for example, recommendations may include helping parties advocate for legal reforms and improving their technical skills, respectively. Addressing issues of political will is more complex and is often directly related to the other two categories. For example, if parliamentary procedures are reformed to facilitate greater organization of party groups in the legislature, political will among party leaders to organize and mobilize around issues might increase as a result. Knowledge of the programming and the political context can be used to brainstorm about how political will within parties might be impacted – and in doing so, it is often helpful to think in terms of incentives. In a final report, suggestions for programming in the political will category could be set out in terms of ways to impact incentive structures that drive decision making within parties.

At some point in the context analysis process, assistance providers may need to determine whether assistance providers they should be involved in party programming in a given country and if so, where to focus their efforts. This will involve addressing some of the following questions (in some cases, some of these questions will be pre-empted by an organization's previous history in a country and/or donor priorities).

Is there a meaningful role and space for the assistance provider and its partners?

- Consider what the needs are and whether the assistance provider is well positioned – in terms of institutional expertise as well as relationships and access – to make a positive contribution.
- What other groups are working with political parties? How can the assistance provider avoid duplication and complement or supplement those efforts?
- Depending on the environment, consider what risks assistance providers and partners may face. (This may include exposure to armed conflict, varying degrees of intimidation or harassment, or even high levels of crime.) What arrangements would need to be made to provide adequate protection to assistance providers and partners?
- Given the resources available, where should the assistance provider focus its efforts, and what might progress look like?

In most cases, transformational change in individual parties and the party system as a whole will not be realistic. What incremental changes would represent the most significant or meaningful impact on the party system or individual parties? Is there one political party that would be more open to reforms, thereby serving as an example to others? Sometimes smaller parties, with less to lose, are more willing to embrace change than larger, more established parties.

- For instance, in closed environments, working with democratic forces to explore alternative methods of outreach and to sustain basic operations within the constraints of their limited space is likely to be a priority.
- In transition environments, a key focus may be raising awareness among nascent parties about participating in conversations concerning the regulatory reforms that will impact them.
- Where groups are marginalized, while the adoption of a quota law may not be realistic in the short term, given local conditions, increased capacity and awareness/sensitivity could represent modest yet significant change.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following table outlines a framework of research questions that could be the subjects of desktop research and interviews. Neither the questions nor the broader categories they belong to are exhaustive, and both can be altered according to the requirements of different country contexts.

As indicated elsewhere in this publication, desktop information will understandably be more readily available for some countries than others. Further, it is always important to consider a combination of perspectives in order to reach balanced conclusions. For some countries – especially those where freedoms of expression and organization are curtailed – it is likely to be more difficult to find balanced and/or detailed sources through desktop research. Special efforts may be required to round out the information. For purposes of analysis, the perspectives of those whose views align with the research team and those that diverge are equally valuable. Moreover, depending on the operating context, some lines of inquiry will prove more fruitful than others. For instance, in situations where political parties are just emerging, party structures are likely to be loosely defined. As such, it is likely to be difficult (and possibly less relevant) to pursue detailed information about those systems and processes.

However, given the importance of developing a broad picture of the political environment, all categories should be included in an analysis of any context. While users may consider focusing on those categories they consider the most important, this runs the risk of imposing preconceived – and not necessarily accurate – notions about what is ‘important’ onto the analysis before it has begun.

The questions are phrased from the perspective of analysts, presenting what they need to know for the context analysis. Examples of actual interview questions are included in Appendix 2.



Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Formal Institutional Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What formal institutional and structural conditions define the political system in country X? • How would country X be categorized according to the following party system types? Authoritarian/semi-authoritarian, single party dominant, multiparty competitive. • What cross-cutting themes (e.g., conflict/conflict prone, party marginalization, transitional) characterize the context? • How have these conditions come to exist, through what processes, when, and by whom were they created/influenced? • How do these conditions affect parties specifically? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal documentation; • Internal local staff knowledge; • International Crisis Group (ICG) reports; • Local/international political think tank or research group papers; • Academic journal articles; • IPU reports; • Freedom House country analyses; • U.S. Department of State Human Rights Reports; • International IDEA's databases on electoral system design, quotas, and party finance; • Parliamentary/legislative staff (for rules of procedure); • Media coverage of politics and politicians; and • Government documents, e.g., the Ministry of Justice's website for legal gazettes.
<p>Informal Institutional Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do social groups (e.g., those based on ethnicity, tribe, religion, language, geographical region, class, caste, wealth) interact with one another (e.g., through intermarriage, the existence of workers' unions, coeducation)? • To what extent is law enforcement unequal (e.g., dependent on a person's connections or wealth)? • Where, when, how, by whom, and why are decisions made about legislation, policy and other governance issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal local staff knowledge; • ICG reports; • Freedom House country analyses; • Local/international think tank or research group papers (e.g., Human Rights Watch, Amnesty); • Academic journal articles; • Judicial records of recent or famous cases (if publicly available); • Internal experiences working with parties; • Other international organizations' experience working with parties; and • Parties' own publications and broadcasts.



Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Historical Events, Trends and Patterns in State-Citizen Interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At what points and how or why has political change at the national level occurred in the past and up to now? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mapping of political change over the last 50 years, including through elections, whether peaceful, free or regular; peaceful or violent revolutions; coups d'état; military takeovers; or impeachment of leaders. • In what ways does the state (i.e., state institutions, not individual officials) currently interact with citizens, and vice versa? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Examples of state-citizen interactions include taxation (the proportion of GDP it comprises can indicate the extent to which people trust their government, as well as the government's capacity to collect taxes; what they are used for is also significant), conscription, prevalence of peaceful protests, other forms of nonviolent contestation, civil war. • What role, if any, have parties played in these interactions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » May include organization of protests; complaints to the government; speeches against government policy in parliament, public broadcasts, or newspapers; development of opposing policies. • If a party is in government, to what extent does it use state resources for patronage? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local staff knowledge; • Staff internal knowledge and resources; • International IDEA's direct democracy database; • Historical books; • Journal articles; • ICG reports; • Local and international news reports; • Freedom House country analyses; • World Bank World Development Indicators (for tax statistics); • Party publications and broadcasts; • Parliamentary records and broadcasts; and • Parties' internal policy documents.

Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Social Legacies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are some social groups marginalized on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region, youth, sexual orientation, etc.? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Groups could be marginalized either formally, through state policy that favors some groups over others, or informally, through prevalent cultural norms. • To what extent does the security environment facilitate or restrict public political activity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » May include peaceful protests, participation in elections, party formation, civil disobedience. » In conflict contexts, this question could be altered to reflect security restrictions on more basic activities such as school or work attendance, investment, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal staff knowledge; • IPU Women in National Parliaments report; • U.S. Department of State Human Rights Reports; • National legal documents, including the constitution and citizenship laws; • Numbers of women in positions of office (see IPU statistics); • UNDP Gender Inequality Index; • Quotas for marginalized groups in parliament and parties and whether these are enforced; • Freedom House country analyses; • Human Rights Watch and Amnesty papers; • Socioeconomic statistics published in local/international think tank or research group reports; • Local staff knowledge; • Election turnout figures across the country comparing secure and less secure areas; • Local and international news reports about protests and subsequent state responses; • Civilian casualty rates as published by the UN; and • The extent to which protests are organized publicly or underground.
<p>Personal Incentive Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivates leaders and members to be involved in politics in general? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., issues of ambition, standing within the party, personal policy interests, allegiance to key interest groups, personal access to state resources and private contracts. • What motivates party members and leaders to be involved in programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., questions of ambition, standing within the party, personal policy interests, allegiance to key interest groups, personal benefits such as per diem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party leaders' speeches and news articles; • Party websites; • Think tank profiles on party leaders; • Internal knowledge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » This may include whether or not young members are encouraged to progress through the ranks, e.g., through the existence of young people's events, activities, or training programs; » Extent of the party's involvement with other international democracy promotion groups; and » Extent to which other party members have progressed in the party as a result of participating in international programs, particularly those run by the assistance provider. <p>These source suggestions can provide indications of some leaders' and members' motivations; however, the best way to get answers is to ask them directly through semi-structured interviews described elsewhere in this document.</p>



Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Organizational Values & Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are party policies/platforms developed, if at all? What are the main influencing factors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » If parties are not issue-based, the question could be altered to focus on how different parties define themselves, what they believe they stand for, or who they claim to represent. • How do parties seek to assure their relevance to member interests, if at all? • To what extent are rank and file members informed of and able to participate in party decisions? • How does the party's organizational culture affect its activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Organizational culture may include internal work ethic, institutional structure, and ability to meet deadlines. • What kind of regular events dominate a given party's political calendar, and how do these affect decision making within the party? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » E.g., national elections; local elections; internal party conferences; internal party elections; or parliamentary events, such as budget debates. » Mapping key annual events against party activity would be useful here. Do not assume that parties are at their most active around these events; this will depend in part on the party's capacity to plan ahead and be proactive (as opposed to reactive). • To what extent does the party have relationships with other democratic parties (international or domestic)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDI internal knowledge, or that of other organizations working with parties; • Party publications and speeches; • Party website; • Party's internal documentation, including its own history of activity; • Existence and functions of branch offices; • Status of party's registration documentation - whether or not it has complied with all legal requirements for registration; • Information available at the official party registering body; • Party's publicly-available, realistic aims and objectives, with which party officials and members are familiar; • Existence of training schemes for those members interested in committing more time to the party; • MOUs with other parties or groups; and • Publicly-available minutes from meetings where collaboration was discussed and agreed upon.



Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Party Functioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are different parties structured internally? • What is the day to day management of parties? I.e., who is responsible for this, do they receive regular stipends or salaries, and are political and administrative roles kept separate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The recognition of the importance of day to day organizational management may be a strong indicator of the party's functionality and sustainability. • What is the extent of individual capacity, technical know-how, and skills for tasks such as information gathering, management of branches, and the development of platforms, legislation, strategy and policy? • What is the role of branch offices and what decisions do they make? • What institutional structures exist, if any, to encourage party activists? • What incentives (formal or informal) exist to encourage the participation of women, youth, and other marginalized groups in party structures and as candidates? • Who has control of party finances and how are these administered? • How are party executives, senior officials, and electoral candidates selected, and how often? • What role within the party do its elected parliamentarians or local councilors play, if any? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Do not make assumptions regarding the centrality or importance within the party of party members elected to public office; where there is no formal representation of parties in parliament, this relationship may not be straightforward, and allegiance may evaporate once a candidate is elected to office. • How does the policy/platform-making process incorporate public or constituent opinion, if at all? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational internal knowledge; • Previous baseline studies, if available; • Conversations with party candidates for parliament/local councils. • Senior party officials, through formal or informal conversations; • Internal party documentation like organograms or a party website, if regularly maintained and updated. (If no organogram is available, teams could map out their own, based on information collected elsewhere); • Official party registration body; • Party publications and policy documents; • Frequency of party conferences/congresses, lists of invitees, and party website pages showing advertisements for party focus group activities and invitations for feedback; • Minutes from party congress meetings; • Timeliness of party responses to current events in newspapers, broadcasts, and written statements; • History of party activity over the last five years showing it to be reactive or proactive; • Leaders' broadcasts; and • Parliamentary speeches. <p>If the internal structures that control party finances are centralized or undemocratic, this information will be difficult to find and may require key informant interviews with mid-level party staff.</p>



Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Strategic Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are various parties placed in terms of access to influential people and relationships with significant CSOs, trade unions, the business community, the military, etc.? » 'Access to influential people' could include patron-client relationships, but may also simply mean knowing people in high places, receiving information flows, or being well placed to respond to issues in a timely manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party website for list of party affiliates, senior officials, or an advisory board, if it exists; • Local staff knowledge; • TV channels/radio stations on which they are able to gain airtime; and • Informal conversations with party officials.
<p>Access to resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do various parties finance their activities? E.g., through membership fees, individual donors, government assistance, ownership of businesses? • How sustainable are these sources of funding? • What capacity exists within the party to manage funds effectively? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Party website or internal documentation; • IDEA party finance database; • Official party registration body; • Reports from democracy watchdog NGOs or think tanks; • Internal knowledge; • Informal conversations with senior party officials and staff members; • Existence of internal accounts; • Access to funds by staff members tasked primarily with financial management; • Regular rents paid for buildings; and • Regular salaries paid to staff, if there are any salaried staff.
<p>History of political influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where and how have parties made a difference in the political environment, either locally or nationally? » 'Making a difference' could mean anything from pushing through a shift in government policy on healthcare provision to promoting GOTV activities in the local community, to forcing an election through protests – anything that is publicly visible or experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal staff knowledge; • International IDEA's direct democracy database; • Party website; • Historical accounts of party activities; and • News reports.



Information Needed	Secondary Source Suggestions for Desk Study
<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are next generation leaders treated within parties? • What systems, if any, exist to encourage their development within parties? • What is the role of youth in parties? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Conversely, this question could be phrased in order to look for indicators that new or young enthusiasts are seen as a threat – e.g., a mass movement of young members or mid-level officials out of the party due to a lack of opportunity to move up in the ranks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal conversations with young party members; • Party website; • The prominence given youth wing activities in party publications, the news, and/or the website; • Existence of training programs; and • History of sending young members to trainings held by international organizations.
<p>Party Relationship With NDI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have different parties been involved with NDI before? Does this affect the likelihood of their working with NDI again? E.g., did they participate in NDI training programs? • Do they have experience working with other international democracy practitioner agencies? • What is their general attitude toward international donors and the U.S.? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » This could be an important reflection of a party’s ideological stance, even if the ideology is not clearly articulated by the party itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed feedback forms from previous training programs in which the party participated; • Internal knowledge, particularly that of local staff; • Party website, to see if the party publicizes its connection to assistance providers; • Informal conversations with the party secretariat and other international agencies working in the field, such as the German Stiftungen, IRI, IFES, IDEA, WFD and NIMD; • Leaders’ speeches; • News articles and broadcasts; • Policy documents; and • Informal conversations with donor representatives.



APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

As outlined elsewhere in this publication, this tool suggests the use of semi-structured individual interviews with a number of different respondents representing parties, civil society, government, and other actors. The assumption is made that analysts will have access to these actors. However, before any interviews can take place, it will be necessary to obtain buy-in from party leadership to allow the participation of more junior members. Whether these junior members will be willing to answer questions frankly is another issue – although if they are not, that in itself may demonstrate an institutional culture of deference to leaders. In addition to this, certain questions – such as those concerning party finances – can be sensitive and will need to be asked carefully, toward the middle or end of an interview, so as not to put the respondent on edge from the start.

Preamble

- Introduce the research team and project.
- Explain the kind of information needed – for example, background information about the political context of country X and how parties function within it so that useful programs to assist parties might be developed, specific to the conditions in country X.
- Explain how data will be used (as background data, without quotations and not in published reports), guarantee confidentiality and anonymity, with no record kept of names on transcripts; check to ensure that consent for the interview is given.
- Thank the respondent for their valuable time.

Introductory questions

Please introduce yourself. (Probe: What is your role in the party/organization?)

Formal institutional context:

1. **Tell us about the political system in country X.** (Probes: How does the electoral system work? How does parliament function? Is parliament divided into different interest groups? What laws exist on political activity and parties? How was the constitution drafted? How does the judicial system work? What can you tell us about civil society groups in country X? How about the media?)
2. **How did the current political system become established?** (Probes: Who were the main people involved in creating the current system? When did the current system become established?)
3. **How does the current political system work for parties?** (Probe: As a party representative/someone who works closely with parties, is there anything you would change about the current political system? Please give details.)



Informal institutional context:

1. **How would you describe the structure of society in country X?** (Probes: What divisions, if any, exist between people, and in what ways or through what activities do people of different groups come together, if at all?)
2. **Tell us about people's access to justice in country X.** How would you describe the judicial system?
3. **If another party proposed to make an alliance with your own party, who would make a decision about this, and how would that decision be made?** (Probe: What do you think would influence that decision?)

Historical events, trends and patterns in state-citizen interactions:

1. **Tell us about political change in the past in country X.** (Probes: When and how has the government changed in the last fifty years?)
2. **In what ways do ordinary people come into contact with government institutions in country X?** (Probes: Tell us about taxation here – what kinds of taxes are collected, and from whom? Is military service required of young people? Can you give an example of a recent protest that has taken place? What was it about and how did the government react?)
3. **How, if at all, are parties involved in these interactions with the government?** (Probes: Can you give an example of when your own party has wanted or tried to confront the government? How did the party do this? What was its main objective?)

Social legacies:

1. **Tell us about opportunities for young people/women/other marginalized groups in country X.** (Probes: How easy is it to get a job or go to university? What are the basic requirements? Is this the same or different in different parts of the country? What about among different groups of people? Note that these probes could be modified and/or repeated for women and other marginalized groups.)
2. **Tell us about the security situation here and how, if at all, it affects your party's activities.** (Probes: Is this the same across the country?)

Personal incentive structures:

1. **Tell us about why you wanted to become involved in politics in the first place.** (Probes: What or who first motivated you?)
2. **If an international organization was running a training program for party members, do you think members of your party might be interested in participating? For what reasons?**



Institutional incentive structures:

1. **Tell us about the activities your party is involved in this year.** (Probes: Which do you think are the most important and why? What happens at the party offices during these events? Who is in charge?)
2. **Can you describe the administrative side of the party's activities?** (Probes: Who is responsible for this?)
3. **If a member was interested in becoming more involved with the party, how would they do this?**
4. **To what extent does the party have relationships with other parties?** (Probes: How are decisions made about which parties to form alliances with? Are there any criteria for this? What about connections with international parties?)

Internal functioning/accountability:

1. **Who is responsible for overseeing party finances and how are these administered?**
2. **How are decisions made within the party?** (Probes: Who participates in decision making? Can you give an example of a recent party decision that was made? What happened after the decision was made?)
3. **If/when you have a party conference, who is invited to attend?** (Probe: How often do these take place, and where?)
4. **If a party member in the provinces wanted to make a suggestion to the party leadership, how would he or she do this?**
5. **How are party officials selected? How are electoral candidates selected?** (Probe: What role within the party do its elected parliamentarians/local councilors play, if any?)

Policy/platform development:

How are party policies/platforms developed? (Probe: Can you give an example of a recent policy made by the party and the process through which it was made?)

Party relationship with assistance providers:

1. **Has the party been involved with external assistance providers before?** (Probe: Has the party participated in training programs offered by external partners? If yes, can you describe the experience? Has the party worked with other international agencies? What were your impressions of them?)
2. **Do you have any contact with international donor agencies such as USAID?** (Probe: What has been your experience in this regard?)



Formal organization:

1. **How is the party structured internally?** (Probe: What different branches/departments exist? Can you describe the hierarchy of authority in the party?)
2. **How does the day to day management of the party function – who is responsible for this; do they receive a stipend or salary?**
3. **How would you describe the level of skills that individuals in the party have?** (Probe: For example, in the areas of information gathering or the development of platforms, legislation, strategy or policy?)

Strategic connections:

How is the party placed in terms of its access to influential people?

Access to resources:

How does the party finance its activities? (Probe: For example, through membership fees, individual donors, or government assistance? How sustainable are these sources of funding? How are they managed?)

History of political influence:

In your opinion, where and how has the party made a difference in the political environment, either locally or nationally?

Training:

If a young member of the party was interested in receiving further training in political skills, how would they access this kind of training? Who would they speak to? (Note that this question could be adapted for different types of marginalized groups.)



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