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Strategic Planning for Political Parties:

A Practical Tool





International IDEA

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Netherlands Institute for **Multiparty Democracy**

Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

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Preface

It is a paradox: political parties have the ambition to govern states, but they are often poorly governed themselves. There is a constant tension in democratic politics between the short-term need to respond to the electorate and the development of long-term goals and strategies.

Political parties, in particular, are too often forced to focus on short-term external crises to the detriment of the medium and long-term development of their strategies and the internal organizations to support these strategies. Especially in young democracies, this tends to weaken political parties' prospects for survival in often rapidly changing political landscapes. In turn, it also tends to weaken public trust in political parties as a vehicle for representation and governance. Only by having the capacity to look ahead and anticipate developments can political parties prepare themselves adequately for new societal demands and democratic changes.

This publication provides a practical tool to help political parties conduct strategic planning and offers assistance providers and political parties alike a step-by-step methodology for conducting this planning process. If political parties want to prepare adequately for tomorrow's political developments, they have to invest in their organization and its foundations. Doing so is only possible if the political party's organizational structure and processes adequately reflect the rapidly changing political landscape that surrounds it. This means regularly analysing surroundings and adapting to new developments using broad input from within the party.

Around the world, we see that it is possible for political parties to reinvent themselves and be sustainable. The repeated prediction in previous decades of the downfall of the political party as the main body

for participation and representation in democracies has thus far been proven wrong. Political parties from Argentina to South Africa and Australia have now passed their centenary anniversaries, an age that only a handful of companies or other private organizations on their continents can match.

At the same time, that which does not evolve will wither and die, and political parties do need to adapt and change to meet the needs of citizens. The recent emergence of citizen-led protest movements in all parts of the world, from Egypt to Chile and Thailand, has challenged political parties to find new ways of representing people, lest they be replaced by more direct methods of democratic participation. New forms of technology such as social media, which facilitate citizens' expression of political opinions, may also pose a challenge to political parties that cannot see the need to adapt their ways of working.

This *Strategic Planning Tool for Political Parties* is a contribution that parties around the world can use in their attempts to further gain the interest and trust of citizens. In this tool, which was first successfully tested by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) in its programmes in Georgia and Mozambique, we hope that political parties will find a resource to improve their public standing as well as their chances at electoral success. Moreover, the tool's succinct and practical approach to planning—making use of worksheets and a clear step-by-step set-up—is aimed specifically to make it easier for politicians to engage in planning in the busy world of politics.

In late 2011, International IDEA and NIMD signed a strategic partnership agreement, intending to increase cooperation in all areas of their work. Since

then, both organizations have set out to produce a range of joint publications in, among others, the area of political parties. After a publication on *Constitutional Reform Processes and Political Parties* in 2012 and now the *Strategic Planning Tool for Political Parties*, joint publications will follow in 2013 dealing with political party dialogue and political finance.

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1 Introduction

This tool is intended to guide political party assistance providers in helping political parties set up and carry out strategic planning processes. It offers an approach to, and guidelines for, the practice of strategic planning aimed at systematically strengthening parties' organizational capacities. We treat electoral campaigning strategy as one aspect of a party's organizational functioning, but by no means as the core issue in organizational strategic planning.

Our key principles in developing this tool have been co-ownership of the tool between political parties and assistance providers and a strong focus on the local circumstances, institutional structures and cultural aspects of the political system in question. Importantly, the planning process itself—and its outcome—are fully owned by the political parties that conduct and undergo the planning exercise. The tool has been developed on the basis of existing insights from the literature on organizational strategic planning for non-profit organizations, practical experience with strategic planning processes in several countries (primarily Georgia and Mozambique) and with the input of a broad group of practitioners and other experts from leading international assistance providers. This publication makes reference predominantly to cases in which the tool has been used by an assistance provider that supports multiple parties at the same time. However, organizations that work with only one party, or a selected part of the political spectrum, are considered an equally important target audience. Virtually all the tool's elements are relevant and useful to assistance providers that have either a multiparty or party-to-party approach. Therefore, where the tool uses the plural 'parties', it can often be replaced by the singular 'party' for those using a bilateral approach. In the remainder of this chapter, we address the importance of strategic planning for political parties,

the tool's audience and the organization of this publication.

1.1 The benefits of strategic planning for political parties

Political parties in any political system typically find themselves in a complex and uncertain environment. Change is a constant within all parties and party organizations, and in their external surroundings. New individuals take up positions among the leadership, cadres and back office, and others leave. Budgets change, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. Changes may be made to the constitutional arrangements, legislation and other types of regulation concerning the political process and political parties. The expectations of the electorate as a whole (or of specific constituencies) may change, and the electorate may change, for instance, as a consequence of demographic developments. Economic turmoil and domestic and international policy challenges may either suddenly or gradually confront the party with new issues. Competing parties may rise or decline. Parties may split, merge or find other groups or individuals with which to collaborate.

Such changes and challenges can either strengthen or weaken a party, and can either contribute to the realization of the party's goals, have little impact or jeopardize the party's continuity. In order for parties to be successful in such an environment, focus, determination and adaptive institutional capacity are required. It is vital for a political party, including the party organization, to have a shared idea and picture of what the party is, where it wants to go and how it plans to get there. This tool is designed to offer the mechanisms to develop these shared visions.

Strategic planning offers political parties the opportunity to step back from their day-to-day activities and worries to reflect on more fundamental and long-term issues. It also provides an approach for setting realistic long-term objectives for repairing, maintaining or enhancing their institutional strength. From a process point of view, engaging in strategic planning helps increase internal debate and idea formation and unites members around common objectives. As a result, priorities for institutional strengthening can be identified, strategies to move forward can be formulated and benchmarks for progress can be established. In short, strategic planning helps political parties define where they want to be and what kind of action agenda is necessary to strengthen their institutional capacity in the future.

Strategic planning and enhanced institutional capacity offer clear benefits to political parties.

1. The party and the party organization can **enhance their performance and respond more quickly (and more successfully) to changing circumstances**. Clearer insights into a party's strengths, weaknesses and priorities allow it to achieve better results using fewer resources. In this context, better results do not mean better electoral results, but achieving organizational goals such as stable or increased levels of funding, enhanced capacity to organize party congresses, more effective and efficient ways of selecting candidates, and better training programmes for party members.
2. A strategic attitude can also enhance understanding and the **capacity for organizational learning**. This leads to more conscious, more disciplined and better-informed methods of self-analysis and decision making. Finally, planning can improve external communications and societal and political support, because it helps a party communicate its core ideas and objectives more effectively—making it more recognizable and creating a more positive, consistent and confident public image.

Strategic planning is equally relevant from the perspective of political party assistance providers.

1. **Strengthening parties' institutional capacity—typically the mission of assistance providers—is more likely to succeed, and is more likely to take place in a focused way, if the political party has developed an organizational**

mission. Strategic management as a tool for political parties involves formulating a mission and following up to fulfil that mission. For the parties that assistance providers work with, strategic planning can help improve their positioning vis-à-vis their external environment and their performance in their internal environment.

2. **A longer planning time frame makes it easier for assistance providers to programme and organize their support to political parties, and to work together with other assistance providers**. A long-term strategic plan extends the time frame of their partner parties' objectives and planning, and is therefore more realistic and effective than one-off projects and funding. A sound strategic plan will lead to identifiable projects for the medium and longer term, and such plans may function as a framework for project proposals for which the assistance provider can, in turn, make funding or other types of assistance available.
3. Support to strategic planning can be **equally successful when carried out with a single or multiple political parties at the same time**.

However, an inclusive strategic planning process, in which multiple political parties take part individually, helps identify possible joint challenges to both institutional capacity building and the democratic system in question. As such, at a more macro level, strategic planning will help assistance providers identify priorities and determine their future focus areas.

1.2 Audience

This tool was primarily developed for use by assistance providers working with political parties in emerging democracies. Below, they will find details of theory and practice, as well as recommendations on the entire process of strategic planning: process design and initiation, internal and external analyses, drafting the plan, and the implementation process. The tool considers issues such as securing the initial (and sustained) commitment of the political parties being assisted. Assistance providers—and, where relevant, their local implementing partner organizations—will find the tool a useful means of initiating and coordinating the planning process.

Although political parties may not be the primary audience of this publication, they are its central

actors and core beneficiaries. They will take the actions, implement the plans and reap the benefits. Therefore demand from and buy-in on the part of, the political parties is essential for the planning process to succeed.

In addition to assistance providers, this publication is targeted directly towards any other interested individuals or groups that want to learn more about strategic planning and strategic management in a political or politicized environment. Such individuals or groups interact with political parties, but are not direct beneficiaries of the process of strategic planning for political parties. They may include people affiliated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donor organizations and various kinds of public institutions. The tool is relatively generic, so it can be used as a starting point in all parts of the world. However, given the importance of (a) language and (b) the institutional structure, political-legal arrangements and culture of each country, the tool should be transposed and tailored to the specific setting in which the political parties operate. This transposition exercise should ideally be carried out by experts from the country. Annex I gives pointers on how to tailor the tool to a given national setting.

1.3 Structure of the planning tool

The remainder of the publication is structured as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the theory and general background of the concept of strategic planning. It places strategic planning for political parties in

the wider context of strategic planning, and in the specific context of providing assistance to political parties in young democracies. Chapter 2 may be considered optional reading; those with a broad interest in strategic planning will find it useful, whereas readers with a specific practical focus may choose to proceed directly to the practical parts, which begin with Chapter 3.

Chapters 3 to 6 describe the tool step by step. This part sets out the various phases of the strategic planning process for political parties: designing and initiating the process, internal and external factors, drafting the plan and the steps towards implementation. The methodology used for these sections is based on the model used by Bryson and Alston (2011). Chapter 7 gives an account of the strategic planning programme carried out by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) with seven political parties in Georgia from 2010–11 and with three parties in Mozambique in 2012. This chapter sketches out the activities, practicalities and experiences that can form part of a programme that uses this tool. Annex I presents guidelines for transposing the generic tool to a country-specific tool. Annex II* contains a series of worksheets that support each of the phases using practical questions and activities. Annex III lists the costs and managerial issues that should be taken into account in a strategic planning programme. Annex IV provides interview guidelines for post-planning meetings.

Figure 1.1

Types of audiences for the Strategic Planning Tool



* The worksheets included in this Annex are inspired by (and based on) the worksheets in John M. Bryson and Farnum K. Alston, *Creating your Strategic Plan*, Third Edition. Copyright © 2011 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

2 Strategic planning for political parties in context

2.1 Organizational action in a changing environment

The previous chapter described the continuously changing—and often challenging—political, legal, societal and economic environment in which political party organizations may find themselves. That environment is likely to affect the party's internal and external spheres, and thus the degree to which it can achieve its aims. Managing these issues effectively may increase the party's ability to achieve its goals. If such issues are either not addressed or ineffectively addressed, the consequences could be dire.

There are different ways in which a political party organization can relate to actual and anticipated change. In some cases, the organization automatically evolves in response to environmental changes without any conscious action—and without any influence over the outcome of the change. Such a shift may later be evaluated as detrimental to the organization's capacity to achieve its goals; or, worse, it may herald the end of that political party. In this case, the party has, in a very real sense, become the plaything of external actors and circumstances. At the other end of this spectrum, the party organization may take charge of its own destiny by actively

scanning its environment in an attempt to anticipate environmental change. Between these two extremes, we can place (1) adaptive action, in which the party recognizes environmental change and makes incremental adaptations to cope with it; and (2) reactive action, in which the party is affected by the implications of unforeseen change, is perhaps thrown into crisis and changes in response. Table 2.1 presents the spectrum of ways in which a political party may relate to environmental change. This continuum departs from the idea that the higher the degree of anticipation, the greater the capacity to adjust in a timely and effective way, taking the party's future into its own hands and enhancing its capabilities in the future.

It is the task of party leaders and managers (i.e., political figureheads as well as heads of the party organization) to effectively steer their party through the inherent complexity and uncertainty of their environment. The underlying assumption of this tool is that leaders and managers are best able to do this effectively if they act based on a carefully developed strategic plan that has come about using a dialogic process of internal and external analysis, plan drafting and implementation. By dialogic we mean that, to an important degree, the involvement of relevant

Table 2.1

Various kinds of organizational action

Proactive action	Adaptive action	Reactive action	Environmentally determined change
Actively scan environment; anticipate environmental change	Recognize environmental change; make incremental change to cope	Hit by implications of unforeseen change; experience crisis; change in response	Automatic change in response to environmental change; no influence over outcome

internal stakeholders determines the success of the process.

The tool presented in this book offers assistance providers and political parties the practical instruments they need to anticipate changes and design and implement effective strategies to address those changes. This tool gives parties the opportunity to take charge of their internal performance and external positioning. More concretely, it involves planning and acting more consciously, coherently and effectively, so that continuity is improved and long-term results are more likely to be achieved.

2.2 What exactly is strategy?

The term 'strategy' is used in connection with political parties in multiple ways. Perhaps the first that comes to mind is a party's strategy to maximize its votes in an election. In this sense, strategy is closely related to campaigning; that is, reaching the electorate and convincing as many voters as possible to vote for party X. While this is certainly a crucial strategic aspect of any political party, it is not the type of strategy primarily addressed by this tool. The focus of this tool is on organizational strategy rather than campaigning strategy; that is, integrating an organization's functions and units into a more cohesive, broader strategy. This kind of strategic management involves the ability to improve the party organization as a whole under conditions of complexity and uncertainty. More specifically, political parties often face changing landscapes. Constitutional and other legal reforms affect their organizations' requirements in areas such as the number of local branches a party must have, its membership base or its financial reporting. A party's capacity to act and organize can also be subject to sudden change, depending on the continuity of funding. New parties come and go, making the competitive environment somewhat unstable.

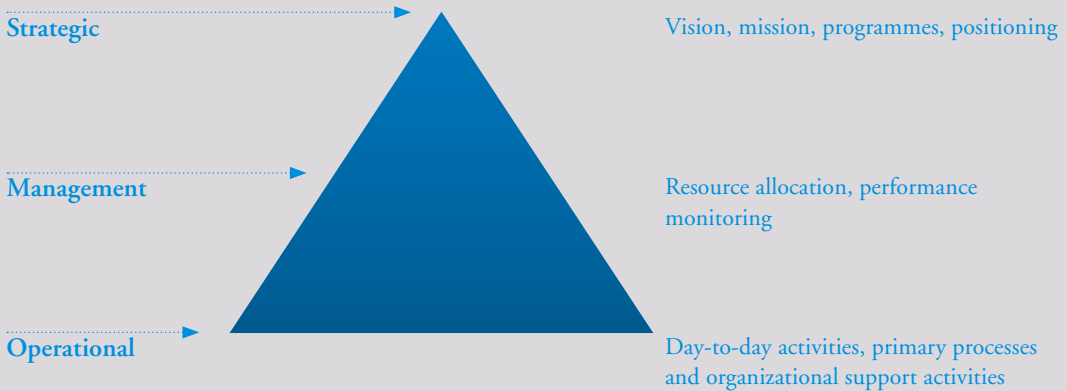
That is not to say that there is no link between this tool and campaigning strategy, since voter support is one of the most crucial legitimizing and authorizing sources for a political party, and in many ways its *raison d'être*. In practice, there is often an overlap between electoral strategy and organizational strategy. A good organizational strategy places the party in a better position to successfully campaign and grow electorally. So when we talk about organizational strategy, electoral strategy is often

automatically involved. However, this tool separates the two types of strategy as far as possible, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities presented by organizational planning, and mostly leaving electoral campaigning strategies aside.

Based on these considerations, it is clear that strategic planning and the implementation of strategic plans are quite different from everyday management and standard operational activities. Different types of management can be visualized as a pyramid (see Figure 2.1). At the bottom of the pyramid, we find operational processes: the day-to-day activities that keep the political party organization going. One level above is the management level; here, decisions about resource allocation are made, performance is monitored and periodic assessments can be made about the degree to which operational goals are being achieved. Strategic planning takes place at the level above 'normal' management: this is where questions are raised and answered concerning the political party's vision, mission, branding, positioning, long-term organizational goals, broader legitimizing programmes and so on. The types of questions addressed by this tool are positioned at this level of the pyramid, but at the same time concern the whole organization. This approach to strategic planning is intended to be as inclusive as possible, meaning that individuals from each level of the organization will be involved in the strategic planning effort. In addition, the closer one gets to implementing individual strategies to tackle specific strategic sub-issues, the more important the management and operational levels become.

Figure 2.1

Different levels of organizational action



Organizations of any kind, whether private corporations, government organizations or not-for-profit organizations, have a number of basic characteristics in common: they are a collective of people or groups of people; they strive to accomplish a certain goal or set of goals; and they have to operate in an environment on which they partly depend, which partly depends on them and which is changing almost continuously.

Strategic planning is a way of thinking, acting and learning that can enable organizations to better achieve their goals and secure their survival amid the uncertainty and complexity of their internal and external environments. Strategic planning presents an approach to dealing with serious challenges and making the most of opportunities. The strategic planning process allows organizations to develop and determine their long-term vision, direction, activities and performance. It usually takes a comprehensive view by looking at the 'big picture' of the what, the why and the how of an organization, but it also leads to specific targeted actions.

Strategic planning can thus be defined as 'a deliberative, disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it' (Bryson 2011). It is visionary, on the one hand, but

based on a thorough, rational analysis on the other. Vision and analysis aim to reinforce each other, making strategic planning a flexible and practical guide for decision making and resource allocation.

Before discussing the evolution of strategic planning, it is important to note other characteristics of the organizational strategic planning approach. Rather than focusing on a single aspect of the organization or on one type of activity, strategic planning encompasses the whole organization—its mission, goals, structures, revenues and stakeholders. The approach is partly outward looking, examining the organization in the context of its wider environment and developing strategies for action based on a broad understanding of the organization's position. Strategic planning is also forward looking, anticipating likely conditions in the external environment in the medium to long term. The key is to identify the major changes that will have to be made by (and to) the organization to ensure that it can optimally pursue its mission in the future.

2.3 The evolution of strategic planning and management

Strategic planning as a common organizational practice originated in the industrialized countries in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Private corporations were confronted with new challenges resulting

from the shift from a supply-driven economy to a demand-driven economy. This shift had two important implications for these corporations: marketing became an increasingly important issue and long-term planning emerged as a serious question. Integrated long-term planning and marketing strategies became known as strategic planning (Crol 1999: 164). The main assumption behind the concept of strategic planning was that rational and predictable circumstances would enable a corporation, or any other organization, to formulate long-term plans in a top-down manner (Robbins 1990: 121; Mintzberg 1994: 5–8; Dijkstra 1998).

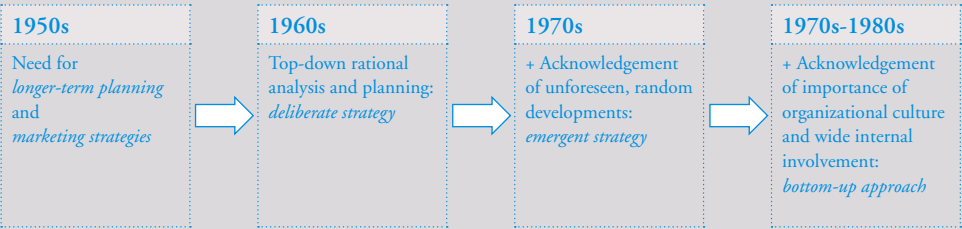
In the late 1970s, Mintzberg added an important element to thinking about strategic planning when he proposed that strategy consists partly of rational, anticipated planning (what he called *deliberate planning*) and partly of unforeseeable, random developments (which he termed *emergent planning*). Importantly, Mintzberg realized that an organization’s strategy is often a blend of each (Mintzberg 1994: 24–5).

At the same time, it became increasingly clear that organizations were by no means successful at identifying the major developments and stakeholders in their environment. The idea that strategy could best be developed at the top of an organization was also questioned. It was regarded as increasingly important to involve multiple layers within an organization in the strategy development process. In addition, the importance of the external, as well as the internal, environment was stressed. Increasing attention was paid to bottom-up approaches and the involvement of staff members and employees, and organizational culture—or the social dimension—became an additional crucial element of strategic planning and strategic management.

Although most thinking on, and development of, strategic planning and strategic management had previously been directed towards the private sector, in the 1980s public sector and not-for-profit sector organizations started to use its concepts to an increasing extent.

Figure 2.2

The evolution of thinking about strategic planning in the private sector



While the final and ultimate goal of strategic planning for businesses is maximizing shareholder profit, the goals and missions of public and not-for-profit organizations are often less clear,¹ and in many cases, may conflict (or at least seem to). For public and not-for-profit organizations, the notion of public transparency, the requirements of good governance, and the strongly legalistic and political (on top of the major economic) characteristics of their environments place specific—and arguably additional—constraints and challenges on long-term planning and public relations/branding. Mark Moore emphasizes that the goals and resources of public and not-for-profit organizations differ so much from private companies that a different approach to strategic management is needed (1995).

This approach makes the organizational mission the leading principle for the public sector and not-for-profits, steering their long-, medium- and short-term decisions and strategies. Their organizational mission is to formulate the public value that the organization strives to create. For these organizations, a mere desire to survive is not enough to gain acknowledgment, legitimacy or support from their stakeholders. A higher goal, or *raison d'être*, is re-

quired that appeals to both the external environment (which provides the organization with external connectivity and legitimacy) and the internal environment (which provides the organization with internal connectivity and commitment).

Strategic planning and strategic management are often seen as more difficult for public and not-for-profit organizations than for private companies. This is partly because of the above-mentioned special requirements for such organizations, but there are other reasons as well. In public and not-for-profit organizations, decision-making authority is often more decentralized, or at least more fragmented, than in private sector organizations. In addition, the politics-bureaucracy dichotomy is a complicating factor in governmental organizations. While the goal of public and not-for-profit organizations is to create as much public value as possible, defined in a variety of ways, based on the specifics of their mission, the degree to which they create that value depends on their organizational capacity (or inputs from the internal environment) and their level of legitimacy and support (or inputs from the external environment) (see Figure 2.3).

Table 2.2

Basic strategic concepts in the private and public sectors

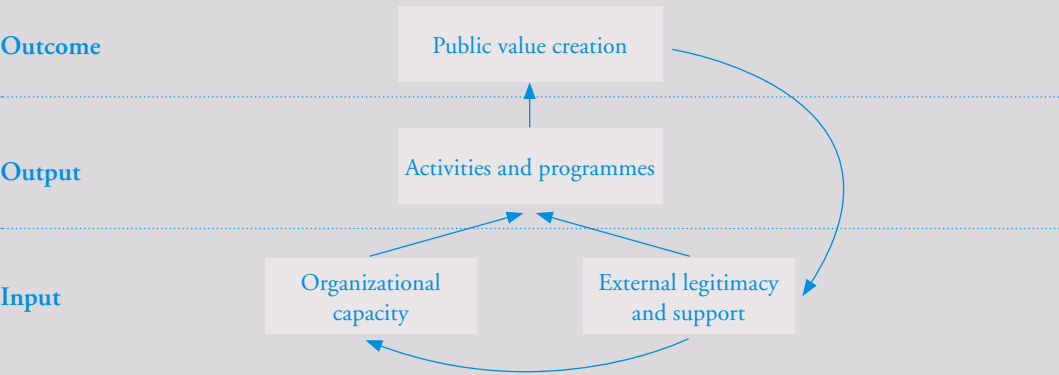
	Private sector	Public sector (not-for-profit and government)
Normative goal	Enhance shareholder wealth	Achieve social mission
Principal source of revenue	Revenues earned by sale of products and services	Charitable contributions or tax appropriations
Measure of performance	Financial bottom line or increased equity value	Efficiency and effectiveness in achieving mission
Key calculation	Find and exploit distinctive competence of firm by positioning it in product/ service markets	Find better ways to achieve mission

Source: Moore, M.H., “Managing for Value: Organizational Strategy in For-profit, Non-profit, and Governmental Organizations” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29(1), pp. 183-204

¹ In between the two extremes of ‘business’ and ‘not-for-profit and government’, hybrid categories of organizations exist, such as those that have adopted the triple bottom line (profit, people and planet) approach and social enterprises. For reasons of clarity and brevity, such hybrid categories will not be included in the discussion.

Figure 2.3

Strategic planning and strategic management as public value creation



Source: Moore, M.H, “Managing for Value: Organizational Strategy in For-profit, Non-profit, and Governmental Organizations” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 29(1), pp. 183-204

Political parties are like private corporations in some respects, in that they are primarily privately funded and operate in a highly competitive and often uncertain environment. In other respects, such as the manner in which they are regulated by law and the absence of an overarching commercial purpose, they are more like public organizations. Moreover, in the public eye, they are part of the political-legal arrangements of the state and are ultimately oriented to public policy. Therefore, when developing this tool for political parties, elements of private sector strategic management had to be combined with elements of public sector strategic management. There are also some specific considerations that are unique to the nature and position of political parties. As there is nothing in the existing literature that can be used as a practical guide, this tool aims to fill that gap.

2.4 Assistance providers and parties in young democracies

Helping political parties strengthen their strategic planning is not an entirely new phenomenon. Ever since the mid-1990s, political party assistance providers have engaged in strengthening political parties’ organizational capacities in a large variety of areas. This includes, among other things, capacities in internal management, internal party democracy, financial management, ideological identity, inclusivity of women and youth, campaigning and parties’ capability to govern (Carothers 2006: 97). Electoral

campaign planning in particular has received much attention, mostly from organizations that are themselves linked to political parties. They have drafted manuals, some of which are publicly available. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) 2009 *Political campaign planning manual: a step by step guide to winning elections* is one such notable example.

Although capacity-building activities have been widely carried out, they have not always been based on a longer-term and inclusive self-assessment of what is missing in a political party organization and what has to improve. There are, however, assistance providers that have helped to carry out elements of such assessments. They have often done so not only to help strengthen parties’ capacities in the longer run but also to ensure that their funds reach the elements of a party’s organization where they are most effective. Nevertheless, many of these analyses have not been as all encompassing as this strategic planning tool. Of those assistance providers that have helped political parties carry out strategic planning, many have done so by linking strategic planning experts to the political parties they work with. Although some have shown remarkable successes, not all have been experts with direct knowledge of the local political environment. Nor have these programmes always been aimed at allowing political parties to assess themselves in as direct a manner as this tool. Instead, many have relied on consultants only to col-

lect information, often through interviews with party officials and focus groups, on the basis of which recommendations to the parties were provided.

Another body of work that makes up part of the strategic planning literature is the more conceptual publications on political parties and party assistance. NIMD's 2004 *A Framework for Democratic Party-Building Handbook*, International IDEA's 2007 policy paper *Effective Party Assistance: Stronger Parties for Better Democracy* and NDI's 2001 *A Guide to Party Development* provide such useful overviews of political party structures and general areas for capacity-building support. Political parties and party assistance providers alike can use these publications as a basis to better understand party structures when engaging in strategic planning. By themselves, however, these publications form only part of what this strategic planning tool aims to provide.

In sum, previous attempts to strengthen the capacities of political parties in young democracies have touched on important elements of this strategic planning tool. In spite of their many achievements, many have, however, also had a number of shortcomings: they have concentrated more on isolated organizational areas, rather than on the party organization as a whole. They have not provided the level of self-assessment that this tool provides. Some have relied on external, rather than local, strategic planning consultants. Other publications have been descriptive handbooks and guides that present

party models instead of tools that encourage step-by-step planning processes. And finally, existing strategic planning exercises have rarely been made publicly available. This tool aims to address each of these gaps.

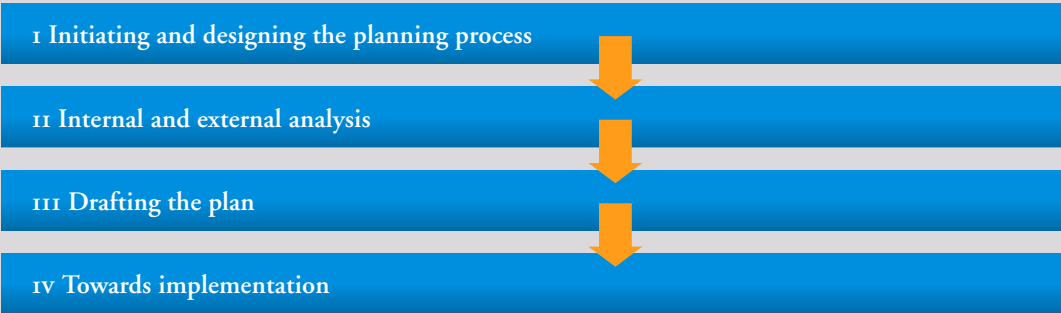
2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the context in which strategic management has developed both conceptually and practically, and discussed assistance providers' traditional approach to planning. The tool contained in this book aims to connect existing assistance mechanisms for political parties to the insights and experience that can be gained from strategic planning in the private and public sectors. The added value of this tool is that it is a practical guide for assistance providers and political parties, by means of which tested insights from similar sectors can be applied to the world of political parties, thereby strengthening their organizational capacity and ability to achieve their longer-term goals.

Chapters 3 to 6 outline a step-by-step methodology for strategic planning and strategic management. Chapter 3 covers the first, preparatory steps of initiating and designing the planning process. Chapter 4 describes the self-analysis phases of internal and external analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with drafting the plan and designing the implementation process, respectively.

Figure 2.4

Four phases of strategic planning for political parties



3 Phase I: Initiating and designing the planning process

Several actors are discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 4. First, there is the assistance provider, which typically (but not necessarily) initiates, facilitates and funds the process. Then there are the consultants, who are experts in politics, organizations, planning and related fields, who are drawn in by the assistance provider on a project-by-project basis and play a role in carrying out the planning effort with the political parties. Next there are the focal points, the contact persons from the participating parties with whom the assistance provider and the consultants are in direct contact. The focal points lead the strategic planning working group of their respective parties, a collective of six to nine individuals from different strands of the party organization that carries out the planning effort on behalf of the party.

Relations between the assistance provider, consultants, focal points and working groups may be organized in various ways. There is not a single, best way to structure these relations. What will work best in a given situation will depend on factors such as (a) the number of parties taking part (the larger the number of parties, the larger the number of people involved, thus the greater the need to formalize coordination); (b) the general political landscape (the lower the level of trust and homogeneity across the actors involved, the greater the need to formalize coordination) and (c) local circumstances, such as the availability of experienced consultants and the level of familiarity with strategic planning within the party working groups. Figure 7.1 illustrates the organizational structure of the full planning process used in Georgia in 2010–2011.

3.1 The assistance provider as process facilitator

As in any project, one actor should take the initiative. In some cases, the primary actor will be the assistance provider that has made the funding and guid-

ance available. It may be that the political parties have specifically requested an assistance programme that covers strategic planning, or this may have been the assistance provider's idea based on an analysis of the political landscape. In principle, one variant is not better or worse than the other, but it is important to talk about the ownership of the programme.

Particularly if the idea or initiative originated from an international assistance provider, albeit in response to input from local political parties regarding analyses of the political context, a key task will be to ensure that the recipient political parties make the programme their own. Strengthening this sense of ownership will involve fostering commitment, responsibility and a genuine belief in the added value of the effort as a whole. Although the assistance provider's role may be that of initiator, facilitator and sponsor, from the outset, efforts should be made to involve participating political parties to encourage ownership of the process.

The role of the assistance provider is also to achieve high levels of participation and inclusiveness, monitor progress, detect stagnation or hiccups at an early stage, and resolve problems in close cooperation with the consultants. The importance (and difficulty) of these tasks should not be underestimated, as the programme will, by definition, take place in a highly politicized and politically sensitive environment. This context makes management of the process by the assistance providers a crucial, time-consuming and, at times, challenging task.

Some assistance providers may have experienced professionals in the field of strategic planning and strategic management within their organization. However, since strategic planning in such politically charged contexts is distinct from working on business strategies, organizations lacking internal

expertise would be advised to bring in an external expert with specific experience of strategy development with organizations that operate in a clearly politicized and legalistic or constitutionally regulated environment.

3.2 Local preparatory activities
3.2.1 Participation and inclusiveness

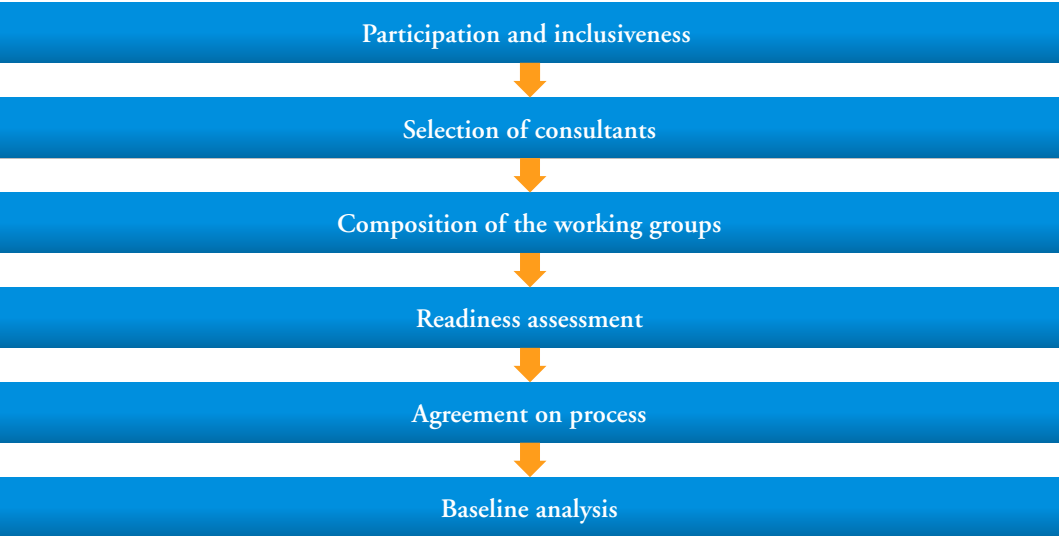
A programme of strategic planning with political parties can be conducted with either multiple or single parties. Depending on the nature and mission of the assistance provider, an inclusive and non-partisan approach to providing assistance can strengthen trust and goodwill towards the provider from a broad spectrum of the partner society. It can make the programme as a whole more legitimate, as no distinction will be made between different political-ideological orientations. Running the programme roughly simultaneously with as many parties as possible offers benefits in terms of efficiency (from the degree of repetition, standardization and routine on the part of the local consultants). At the same time, assistance providers that are used to

working with only one political party in a country, or a selected part of the political spectrum, equally stand to benefit from using this tool. In particular, when a bilateral approach gives the assistance provider greater access to the political party organization, chances are that the tool will be taken on board more easily and that weaknesses in the party will be more easily revealed and discussed.

Creating and maintaining participation and inclusiveness can be a daunting task. There are two main routes to achieving this. The first is the process route: building and sustaining good professional relations with each of the selected parties, displaying a certain degree of flexibility towards the political parties and effectively addressing any of their legitimate concerns about (or barriers to) continued participation. The principle of inclusiveness across political parties also represents an opportunity to tactfully include potentially marginalized groups such as women, youth and minorities within the parties themselves and ultimately across political life.

Figure 3.1

Phase I activities



The second main route is creating commitment to the programme by identifying what will be gained. The potential benefits of strategic planning for political parties are discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. A more negative approach would be to communicate the potential risks of not participating, in both absolute (i.e., a missed opportunity for your party) and relative terms (i.e., a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis other political parties). Using the successes of, and results from, similar programmes in other countries adds to the credibility of the 'sales pitch'.

3.2.2 The role and selection of consultants

The selection of local consultants is an important issue. Although these consultants can in theory also be staff of the assistance provider itself, there are some advantages of using outside experts. First, not all assistance providers have had in-house experience in strategic planning. Second, the advice to political parties demands high-intensity assistance for a short period of time. This may be more easily provided by contracting outside experts on a short-term basis than by hiring additional permanent staff. Third, the use of external consultants allows the assistance provider to play an impartial monitoring role between the political party and the experts, thus creating an extra guarantee of high-quality and impartial advice.

Both the level of participation in, and the eventual outcome of, the process depend to an important degree on the acceptability of the consultants to the participating political parties, and on the quality and dedication of these consultants. Selecting the right mix of consultants is often more easily said than done. Some countries are historically so divided that independent consultants or experts are difficult to find, especially if they are also expected to have the necessary skills to conduct a strategic planning process. Finding the right experts is, however, often about selecting the best possible people within the context and transparently communicating the selection process (and its limitations) to the beneficiaries. The following provides a number of guidelines to help in this process.

It is important to consult with the political parties, either formally or informally, about the individuals who will make up the team of consultants. Involving the political parties in the selection process is

crucial. On the one hand, it will be helpful to get a precise idea of what criteria the parties consider important for selection. On the other hand, the parties might suggest individuals who could otherwise have been missed. Having the approval of the political parties will make their commitment, and thus a successful outcome, more likely. Even if the outcome of the selection process is suboptimal in the eyes of one or more of the political parties, they will be more likely to accept that outcome if they feel they have had a say in the process.

There are several ways to involve political parties in selecting the consultants. Much will depend on the situation in the particular country, especially on the number of suitable candidates to choose from and on the professional and informal relations between the assistance provider, the political parties and the potential consultants.

Another option is to ask political parties to formulate the criteria they think the consultants should meet. Alternatively, they could draw up a shortlist of about ten potential consultants they would be happy to work with. The assistance provider can then make a selection from the list. The most direct way to involve the political parties is of course to let them decide for themselves who their consultants will be. However, this method carries the risk that the parties might choose either people from within the party or people who are very close to it. If the consultants have insufficient distance from the party, this may hamper coordination by the assistance provider and could present problems when the consultant needs to play a guiding or mediating role while working with the party.

Generally speaking, there is both a clear process dimension and a substantive dimension to selecting consultants. In terms of process, the consultants need to have a strictly non-partisan profile, especially if they are involved in guiding multiple political parties. In that case, an explicit or implicit leaning towards one party or another will almost certainly put off one or more of the participants, and could lead to non-cooperation, parties dropping out and a general undermining of the legitimacy and results of the programme. The consultants need to be of unquestionable reputation, and the issue of confidentiality should be beyond doubt.

Substantively, the consultants need to possess a fair share of authority. In this case, authority will be based on a combination of experience, expertise, societal stature, and good communication and coaching skills. The fields of expertise and experience that are especially important for the consultants to possess, either individually or collectively, are:

- strategic planning in the private sector, but preferably in the public and non-profit sectors too;
- understanding of the political, electoral and constitutional systems;
- knowledge of current formal and informal political relations, as well as issues in the political arena; and
- experience of organizational change management and different organizational cultures.

3.2.3 *The composition of the working group*

In order for the programme to succeed, it must be clear who owns the process and who is involved in it. These are two quite separate questions. The party as a whole should feel committed to the process and be willing to take responsibility for it. Not all the party's leaders, elected politicians, board executives, staff, or active and passive members can be directly involved in the core process of strategic planning. A selection needs to be made that strikes the right balance between optimal decision-making capacity, on the one hand, and optimal representativeness, on the other.

The idea of optimal decision-making capacity implies, first and foremost, that the working group is comprised of individuals who have the authority to make decisions. This authority gives the group legitimacy and ensures that the issues raised, and the strategies designed by the working group, can be expected to have the support of the party's senior leadership. Second, decision-making capacity implies a relatively small working group. A team of between six and nine people is likely to be most effective. This size is enough to divide the work and allow some degree of specialization, but not so many that discussion becomes inefficient and decision making difficult. Optimal representativeness is another important quality of the working group. Ideally, the group should be a cross-section of the party. It is important that the different branches, as well as the different hierarchical tiers, of the party organization have a seat on the strategic planning working group. This

means that the team should include members of the party's senior leadership, one or two executive board members, some party staff members, representatives from the regions or local party branches, representatives of the women's branch, youth wing, political party think tank (if applicable) and, if possible, one or two 'ordinary party members'. An even balance between men and women, and between the various wings of the party, would also strengthen the credibility and representativeness of the team. In essence, all major internal stakeholder categories should be included (subject to the limitation on overall size, discussed above). This representation widens the expected input into the process, from a broader range of viewpoints, giving access to higher-quality and more complete information. The likelihood of achieving party-wide support is also increased if all sections and sub-units within the party and party organization feel they have been represented, and that their interests and viewpoints have been included in the analysis and planning.

It is important to note that there is a difference between giving people a seat on the working group and consulting with them as part of the process. If it is felt that making the working group truly representative would produce a group that is too large and unwieldy, it might be better to consult people in other ways, such as through the use of interviews, surveys or meetings.

3.2.4 *Readiness assessment*

Once the preliminary working group has been set up (there may be reasons to change its composition after Phase I has concluded), it will be useful to undertake a readiness assessment. The extent to which the party has the capacity at its disposal to successfully perform a strategic planning effort may be unclear to either the party or the consultants involved. In addition to feasibility questions, the willingness, commitment and sponsorship of the senior leadership should also be addressed. Questions should be asked about whether the party, and above all the party leadership, has the necessary capacity and is willing to commit sufficient time and, if applicable, money. Answering these questions may lead to a realization that the party is not yet ready, or that it first needs to address or resolve one or more critical issues before take-off in order to prevent greater disappointment later on or the inefficient use

of resources. Discussing these questions will introduce the group to what is ahead of them and may unleash a good deal of positive energy and team spirit. This step also commits people to the process. The exercise in which people write down their belief and confidence in the process ties them in. Later on, participants can be reminded of this commitment. Substantive, in-depth discussions and deliberations at this point increase the likelihood that the individuals involved will feel a sense of co-ownership of, and responsibility for, the process as a whole.

Worksheet 1 in Annex II presents a step-by-step guide to performing this readiness assessment. It identifies the possible internal and external barriers to a successful planning process, and suggests how to address these barriers. It estimates the financial and other costs, and provides mechanisms for managing these costs. It also discusses the benefits that are likely (or expected) to result from the effort, and how such benefits may be enhanced or maximized.

The success of the process depends on a number of factors: leadership support, the level of competencies available to carry out the process, resources and time. The readiness assessment is concluded once it has been established either: (a) that the party leadership and the party organization are ready to start; and (b) where the barriers are and how, including a time frame, to overcome them or (c) that the obstacles are too great for the party in question and that it is not ready to participate successfully at this time. Clearly, from the point of view of the assistance provider, and in the interest of successfully increasing inclusiveness, it is important that the readiness assessment is positive. This phase therefore contains a distinct element of 'selling' and motivating the party. Consultants should emphasize that the planning process and the plan are likely to enhance the party's organizational performance. Consultants should also emphasize how the process can be tailored to the situation in which the political party finds itself; for instance, how the process will fit in with other ongoing organizational processes such as budgeting cycles and information technology procurement processes.

3.2.5 Agreement on process and planning

Once the readiness assessment has been completed, and it has been concluded either that the party leadership and the party organization are ready to

start and committed to the process, or that any remaining barriers can be overcome relatively easily within a reasonable amount of time, it is time to begin the planning effort. The preliminary working group, guided by the consultants, will address questions such as the time period that will be covered, the expected time frame for the planning process, the scope of the process and the issues that are expected to be addressed. The process will be broken down into phases, activities and tasks. A realistic schedule should be adopted to ensure that the activities are completed within the agreed period of time. Agreement will also be needed on the form and frequency of reports.

Another important element of the planning process is dividing up the tasks and assigning them to various actors. The role of the consultants will be discussed, and a project focal point will be designated within each party. The focal point should have the status, power and authority to secure continued commitment to strategic planning and be able to hold members of the working group accountable for performing their tasks well. The focal point must also be able to fit the strategic planning efforts to key decision-making points in the party. She or he needs to be willing to exercise enough power and authority to keep the process on track. Therefore the focal point should be a senior party leader or the chairperson of the party's executive board.

The preliminary working group will be officially appointed at this stage, after any changes to its composition have been made based on the requirements identified by the readiness assessment. The need for resources should be discussed at this stage. Depending on how in depth and elaborate the process is to be, and the kind of external assistance available, the need for additional resources could range from very small to considerable. Annex III is a detailed description of the time and money required for the process conducted by NIMD in Georgia in 2010. That is not to say that a strategic planning effort will only be successful if a lot of money is invested in it. The main gains come from a new and systematic way of thinking about party organization in its external environment; adopting this new way of thinking does not have to be a costly undertaking. Ambitions will have to be adjusted to the available resources, but even with limited re-

sources the process remains worthwhile. Either way, it is wise to think about the available resources at this point, and to identify where they will be coming from. In addition, criteria will be identified against which success can be measured, with respect to both the planning process and the strategic plan that will come out of it. Worksheet 1 provides assistance on completing all these activities.

3.2.6 *Baseline analysis*

Accurate pictures of the party and its image of itself, and of the party-organization, are required in order to be certain where a party wants to go and what it can achieve. The purpose of this step is to get an exploratory—but well-informed and uncontested—baseline picture of the party and its organization. Some of these questions will be factual and relatively straightforward, but others may be more open to debate. As with all the steps, the role of the strategic planning team leader will be very important in managing the discussion and ensuring that the outcomes are accurate, timely and widely supported. It is up to the working group leader to decide how much time to spend on these questions. The main purpose is to get answers that reflect reality, albeit perhaps not down to the smallest detail. At this point, concise answers on which everyone roughly agrees are preferable to detailed answers that involve elaborate discussion.

A first crucial set of questions, linked to responsibilities and competencies, is about the constitutional and legal position of the party. Where does it get its funding from? What are the regulations surrounding funding and fundraising? Are there any legal obligations with respect to activities or outputs? Are there any legal restrictions with respect to activities and outputs? To what extent do current activities and outputs fall within such boundaries? And to what extent is there unexploited room for manoeuvre within these boundaries?

A second set of questions concerns the party's organizational structure. How is the party governed internally? What are relations like between the different sections of the party? How do they mutually coordinate? Are they accountable? What is the party's concept of membership? How is party membership organized? How many members are there? How important are membership fees to the funding of the

party? What do members get in return for their fees? What is the state of internal party democracy?

A third set of questions relates to the operational aspects of the party. What is the party organization trying to achieve? How is the party organization run? Who is on the payroll and how are tasks divided? What are the processes concerning party administration? How effective is party administration?

The final set of questions relates to issues that were identified in the baseline analysis as deserving attention during the course of the process. It will be helpful to make a preliminary list of five priority issues that the working group believes should be addressed first. These can be either process or substantive issues. It will also be useful at this point to sketch out which aspects of the party will stay the same as a result of the strategic planning process and which will change.

In the case of Georgia, the political parties benefited from opinion poll research conducted individually for each of the parties. This gave them a clearer idea of the general perception of their party among the general public, and also the dominant ideas about, and opinions of, various aspects of the party's organization.

In the case of Mozambique, the baseline survey proved to be a good way to open initial discussions in the working groups on the functioning of their own parties and about what the party members considered to be the party's main strengths and weaknesses.

In principle, the strategic planning team should complete these tasks but, in many cases, it would be useful to conduct a number of exploratory interviews with specialists and/or knowledgeable people both inside and outside of the party. The output of the baseline analysis should be a report that describes the point of departure for the party. This report could also provide some pointers on the strategic issues that will be addressed later in the process (Worksheet 2 helps to perform this baseline analysis).

4 Phase II: Internal and external analysis

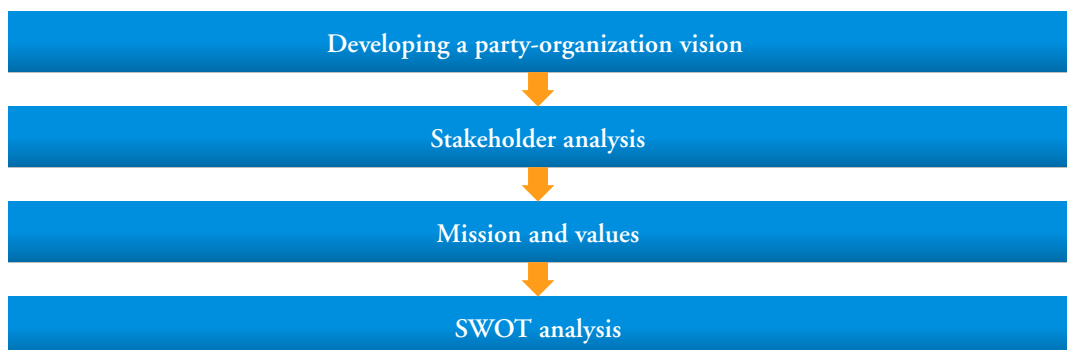
Once the preparatory work of Phase I has been completed, it is time for the strategic planning team to get to work. The thorough analysis undertaken in Phase II will ensure that the resulting plan is realistic, feasible and effective. A baseline analysis helps to develop a party-organization vision and an analysis of internal and external stakeholders. The party's mission and values are identified and articulated, and the process ends with an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Figure 4.1 illustrates these steps.

4.1 Developing a party's organizational vision

A vision statement—often called a vision of success—describes what the organization should look like in order to successfully implement its strategies and achieve its full potential (Bryson 2011). It is important to highlight the party's vision at this point in the process because, even though it is still unofficial and open to alteration along the way, it provides a clear goal or purpose for the party—a dot on the horizon at which all subsidiary actions and efforts are directed. At this point, it is not necessary for the vision to be very detailed, as long as it sets concrete and believable aspirations, motivation and direction. Worksheet 3 takes the working group through the step-by-step process of developing a vision. To illustrate how the Georgian parties formulated their visions, an example of one party's vision is provided in Box 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Phase II activities



Box 4.1

The vision of a Georgian political party

In two years' time...

1. Our political party is the most professionally and effectively organized opposition force in the non-revolutionary wing.
2. Our party's image with the public is one of integrity and responsibility, and is associated with: (a) the promotion of an open and fair electoral system; and (b) a forward-looking and Western-oriented political agenda.
3. Citizens and other stakeholders clearly identify certain topics with our party, such as economic stability, business environment improvement, social justice (health care, pension system), agriculture, science, and access to quality education and national identity (language, culture).
4. Our party has a well-developed network of expert members in different fields, which we can tap into regarding specific policy issues.
5. Our party's membership administration operates smoothly and efficiently.
6. Our internal party culture has matured and professionalized.
7. As a result of cooperation with think tanks, the party presents its own ideological platform, which is effectively adjusted to country specificities and based on public demand.

4.2 Stakeholder analysis

A stakeholder is any person, group or entity that can place a claim on the organization's attention, resources or outputs or that is affected by such outputs. Collectively, the stakeholders make up the environment of the party, which it serves, competes in and depends on. This environment determines the frameworks within which the party must operate as a political actor and an organization. Strategic planning is about enhancing the party's positioning vis-à-vis its environment in order to improve performance and realize its goals. Understanding its environment is of the greatest importance. For a political party, the degree to which it is able to address the needs and desires of crucial stakeholders is the key to success. A stakeholder analysis is an instrument for systematically identifying the party's

internal and external stakeholders, their impressions or judgement of the party and its organization, how they influence the party, and what the party can offer them. Examples of such stakeholders are voters, party members, electoral management bodies, knowledge institutions, suppliers, civil society organizations (CSOs), counterparts in neighbouring countries, regional and local branches, the media, a youth wing and donors.

The stakeholder analysis is undertaken in a number of steps. The first step is to identify, by way of first individual and then collective brainstorming, all the internal and external stakeholders. It is important to be as specific as possible in naming each of the stakeholders. Stakeholders will come in various categories, or sets, with individual actors or organizations part of each category. This brainstorming session will result in a long list of categories of stakeholders and, within those categories, of stakeholders themselves. Encouraging the participants to think about what they are working towards helps make the process concrete and contributes to a more systematic approach to the stakeholder analysis later on.

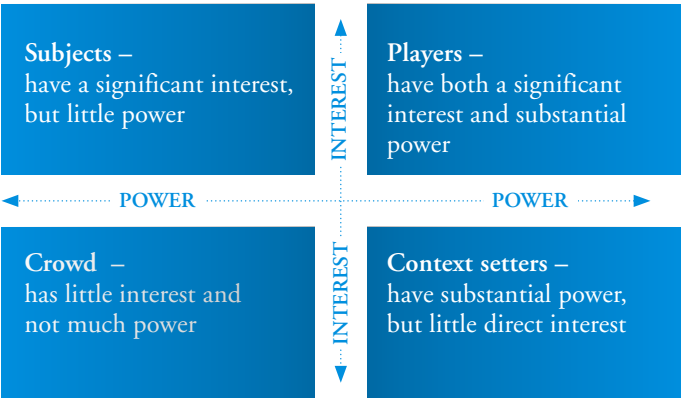
The next step is to answer a number of questions about each internal and external stakeholder (if appropriate, they can be answered for a cluster of stakeholders). What is your sense of the impression the stakeholder has about the performance of the party and its organization? What criteria does this specific stakeholder (or cluster) use to form its opinion of the party? How does the stakeholder influence the party, and how does the party affect this stakeholder? What does the party need from the stakeholder, and what does the stakeholder need from the party? How vital is the stakeholder to the party?

Once these questions have been answered, a so-called power versus interest grid can be drafted (Figure 4.2). This grid groups stakeholders according to their interest (how much of an interest the stakeholder has in the existence and performance of the party) and their power (how strongly the stakeholder can affect the performance or even the existence of the party).

Plotting the complete list of stakeholders in a power versus interest grid can lead to some surprising

Figure 4.2

Power versus interest grid



Source: Eden, C. and Ackermann, F., *Making Strategy: The Journey of Strategic Management* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998)

realizations. It may be that the party has previously focused on stakeholders that are not very powerful, and had no great stake in the party's existence and performance. It is also possible that some highly relevant players (with a significant interest in the party and substantial power) have previously not been given the attention they deserved from the point of view of the party's own interests. The power versus interest grid can thus serve as a compass for future engagement with actors and organizations in the external environment, as well as actors and sections within the party.

Based on the results of the power versus interest plotting, informed judgements can be made about how various stakeholders should be engaged during the strategic planning process. Theoretically, this ranges from ignoring some parts of the crowd quadrant to potentially granting decision-making authority to some stakeholders in the player quadrant. For a step-by-step guide to the stakeholder analysis see Worksheets 4, 5 and 6.

4.3 Mission and values

Any political party derives its reason for existence from striving to make some sort of identifiable societal or political change (or to maintain the status quo). The party and its organization are therefore a means to a broader societal or political end, and not

an end in themselves. Most political parties have a statement of principles, which indicates the party's ideological orientation and values (democracy, solidarity, individual freedom, ecological sustainability, non-discrimination and equality, etc.).

This does not mean, however, that the party as an organization has a clear mission. There is a clear distinction between the party's political mission and its organizational mission. This distinction is connected with the difference between strategic planning for electoral campaigning, policy realization and organizational development. One Georgian political party formulated its political mission and organizational mission as follows:

Our political mission is to strengthen Christian-Democratic values in the country through rational-constructivist approaches. We promote politics based on dialogue and the Christian ethic. We preserve traditions and the national identity. We strive to increase the prosperity of Georgia's population and to create a positive environment for employment. Our organizational mission is to optimally facilitate the realization of this political mission in a manner that reflects our Christian values and that is professional, incorruptible, internally democratic and efficient. We as an organization strive to engage as many fellow Georgians as possible in the political mission of our party.

A party's political mission is usually formulated in ideological terms, whereas its organizational mission is an action-oriented formulation of the party's purpose. The party's organizational mission will therefore be used to support its political/ideological mission so that the latter can be optimally realized. In addition, the mission statement articulates the actions the party organization will take to make conditions as conducive as possible to realizing the party's mission.

Figure 4.3 demonstrates how the political-ideological mission is essentially separate from the organizational mission and the organization's actions, programmes and operations, but also that the organizational elements should always be supportive of (and in the service of) the political-ideological mission. Therefore, as a minimum, there should be congruence between the political-ideological values

and the organizational values. The organization's actions, programmes and operations flow directly from the organizational mission.

The party's political and organizational missions can be formulated by answering a number of questions. What is our current mission? What does it say about who we are, our purpose, who we serve and how we are unique? What are our political-philosophical roots? Which societal values do we hold dearest? What basic societal or political problems do we exist to address? How do we believe these problems should be addressed, and what is our role in doing so? How does our party differ from other parties? These questions can be answered following the steps in Worksheet 7.

Separate from the mission statement, but clearly linked to it in its content, is the statement of organ-

Figure 4.3

The relationship between a party's political-ideological and organizational missions



izational values, in which the party organization expresses how it wants to relate to its stakeholders and how it wants to run its organization. In other words, the values statement describes the party culture. How can the party's current culture best be described? To what extent is the party organization's culture in line with the culture that is required if the party wants to achieve both its organizational and its political-ideological missions? Does the party's current culture facilitate or hamper the party's performance? Are there elements of party culture that should be changed or emphasized to make it more effective or successful? Worksheet 8 provides guidance on completing the statement of values.

4.4 SWOT analysis

This step returns to the strengths and weaknesses of, opportunities for and threats to the party. A preliminary SWOT analysis was undertaken as part of the baseline analysis in Phase I to get an idea of the party's starting position. The initial SWOT analysis is now revisited and carried out in more detail. The purpose is to evaluate the party as a political actor and an organization. Performing a SWOT analysis is an effective way to identify the major internal and external issues a political party faces. The strengths and weaknesses refer to the party's internal environment, over which it has some influence. The opportunities and threats related to the party's external environment, over which it usually has only limited influence. Using the SWOT framework helps a party direct its attention and target its activities where they will be noticed more, better appreciated and more effective. A SWOT analysis also raises awareness of new or unexplored opportunities, and of limitations that should be taken into account.

When thinking about a political party's strengths and weaknesses, relatively simple questions can help provide clarity. What does the party do well? Where are its capacities and talents, as well as their quality and appreciation? What does the party do less well? Where are the shortages, scarcity and frustration? Box 4.2 lists some aspects that should be analysed.

Box 4.2

Checklist for a political party's strengths and weaknesses

- structural organization of the political party;
- party administration;
- membership;
- women and youth;
- policy / programmes;
- internal democracy;
- coalition building and interparty dialogue;
- party resources and finances;
- relationship with the media;
- relationship with civil society; and
- party outreach activities.

A series of questions needs to be answered for each of the four SWOT elements. It is important to keep in mind that the focus should be on the organizational side of the party, and not primarily on its ideological orientation or policy agenda. The questions should be interpreted in relation to the party's organizational structure, human and financial resources, capabilities, competencies and so on, rather than in relation to 'why our views are better than those of the other parties'.

Formulating answers to these questions can be done either individually or as a group. The working group could decide to organize focus groups in order to engage a larger number of people, either to widen access to the specialist expertise needed to answer the question more accurately or to include points of view from different positions within the party. The questions summed up in Table 4.1 are relevant starting points for identifying the party organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The SWOT analysis can be conducted using Worksheets 9 and 10. To illustrate what a political party's SWOT analysis might look like, Table 4.2 shows a SWOT analysis from a Georgian political party.

Table 4.1

Questions as starting points for the SWOT analysis

	Internal	External
Positive	Strengths • What are the advantages of the political party's organizational structure relative to the organizational structures of other political parties in the system? • What does the political party do well, or better than others? What are the activities or programmes that it delivers really well? • What relevant resources are in place and can be relied on? • What is the political party known for? • What aspects of the organization's structure, governance and accountability work well? • What are the strengths of the party's human resource base, membership base and so on?	Opportunities • Where are the best opportunities for the party (in terms of activities, membership base, resource base)? • What trends could or should open up opportunities (changes in technology, demand, legislation, political landscape, supply, etc.)? • Are there likely to be changes in government policies towards political parties? • Are social patterns, values, population profiles, lifestyles, etc., changing? • What events could open up opportunities?
Negative	Weaknesses • What are the disadvantages of the political party relative to other political parties in the system? • What does the party do badly, or worse than others? Which programmes and activities fall into this category? • What relevant resources are volatile, unreliable or missing? • What aspects of organizational and party structure, governance and accountability are problematic?	Threats • What obstacles are most likely to emerge? • Are there old or new competitors that could pose a threat? • Are changes in supply and demand taking place that could threaten the political party? • What technological changes could pose a threat? • Are there debt or cash flow problems? • Could changes in governance policies regarding political parties negatively affect the party?

Table 4.2

A SWOT analysis by one of the Georgian political parties

	Internal	External
Positive	Strengths • staff (highly skilled, motivated); • competent and professional leader with vision and experience; • team with mutual values; • guaranteed public funding until the next elections; • representation on local councils; • good participation and community links; • number of volunteers (200 activists); • international contacts; • well-functioning webpage; and • voter database.	Opportunities • upcoming change in leadership; • significant untapped volunteer potential; • newly available social media tools; and • availability of previously unused project funding from international and local NGOs.
Negative	Weaknesses • stakeholder conflicts; • inexperience; • weak administrative capacity; • mixed reputation; • overdependence on leader; • lack of competent and qualified human resources; • lack of professional politicians; • poor institutional management; • non-existence of regional organizations; • lack of documented achievements; • poor public funding; • no private funding; and • lack of media access.	Threats • additional resources hard to get; • highly competitive environment; • new government policies not in our favour; • possible conflicts in leadership; • insufficient media resources (restricted air time on state channel); • poor business environment; • threat of election fraud; • voter intimidation; • difficult to manage increasing number of party members; and • lack of participation in political processes.

Box 4.3

South Africa and the African National Congress (ANC)

Strategic planning is not a new phenomenon in all young democracies. In South Africa for instance, the African National Congress (ANC) has undergone strategic planning and self-assessments that have led to attempts at serious internal reforms. The political mission of the ANC is as follows:

‘The African National Congress exists in order to unite all the people of South Africa to transform our country as rapidly as possible into a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous country, based on the principles of the Freedom Charter.’

The ANC’s elaborate organizational self-assessment that it conducted in 2007 included a SWOT analysis on several aspects of the party’s organization. This analysis was laid down in the party’s organizational report, which was presented by the party’s secretary general at the national conference in 2007. It is worth summarizing its set-up here.

The report first analyses contextual and societal developments that may affect the party and its organization. It then discusses the membership and structures of the party, including recent developments, strengths and challenges. Specific attention is paid to the procedural aspects of membership, membership of the various branches and membership in the various regions.

The next section deals with the political and party-organizational developments in each of the nine provinces of South Africa. Then specific performance reports, strengths and weaknesses are presented concerning each of the national structures (the National Executive Council, the National Working Council, the Youth League and the Women’s League). After this, the performance and prospects of national-level sub-committees are discussed. Examples of these sub-committees are the committees on political education and training, media and communications, international relations and constitutional affairs. Another chapter is specifically dedicated to ‘Renewal of the ANC’s Values and Organizational Democracy’.

Interestingly, the ANC’s secretary general used the report to publicly address serious shortcomings in the party’s organization. For instance, it was registered that although party membership increased throughout the country, there was a scarcity of active members; that unity and cohesion should be increased; that there was a risk of sectarian practices and that weak political consciousness among members was an important concern. This strategic planning exercise thus motivated the party leadership to push for internal reforms.

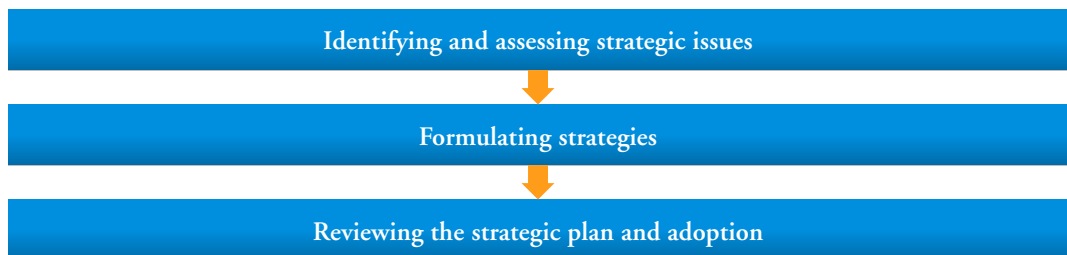
The full report is available at:
<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=2539>

5 Phase III: Drafting the plan

The analysis of the organization and its environment during Phase II is the necessary groundwork for Phase III, which involves identifying and assessing the strategic issues faced by the party, formulating a strategy to address these issues, and reviewing and adopting a strategic plan.

Figure 5.1

Phase III activities



5.1 Identifying and assessing the strategic issues

Worksheet 11 helps the working group draw up a master list of key strategic issues. Anything can be included in this list, as long as it: (a) refers to organizational aspects, rather than strictly electoral or political-ideological aspects, of the party; (b) is phrased as a question to which various answers could be given and (c) pertains to issues over which the party has a considerable degree of control.

What is a strategic issue? When is an issue a strategic one? A strategic issue can be defined as a fundamental policy choice or challenge that affects a party's responsibilities, competencies, mission, target audience, programmes, costs, funding or structure. The difference between strategy, man-

agement and operations is addressed in Chapter 2. This distinction is also relevant here. The best way to separate strategic issues from operational ones is to first list all the issues that seem important to the party and its performance. The operational issues should then be separated from the strategic ones. As a general rule of thumb, an issue is more likely to be strategic than operational if it meets many of the following criteria:

1. The issue would make it onto the agenda of the party's executive board and senior leadership.
2. The issue will confront the organization in the long run.
3. The issue will affect many units or divisions, or the entire party.
4. The issue may have major financial implications.

5. Addressing the issue successfully would require changes in mission or organizational structure, a fundamental change in activities, new funding and/or a significant expansion or retraction of staff.
6. The best approach to the issue is far from obvious.
7. The issue is highly sensitive to the party and a number of external stakeholders.

A separate statement should be made for each of the strategic issues included on the master list. This statement puts the essence of the issue into words, and provides a justification for why it is (or should be) considered a vital strategic issue on the organizational agenda. It should also be made clear how each issue relates to the organizational mission, the party's responsibilities, the vision and the SWOT analysis. In order to assess the importance and urgency of each issue, the consequences of not addressing the issue should also be discussed.

Worksheet 12 is a user-friendly checklist for distinguishing between operational and strategic issues. The sorting of operational and strategic issues will produce two results. The first is a list of operational issues, which affect only one or a few party units, with minor or moderate implications; the best approach to resolving such issues is relatively clear, and the strategic planning working group can hand these issues over to the executive board to be addressed and resolved at the appropriate managerial or operational level within the party. The second result is a master list of strategic issues, which in turn can be reworked as a list of key strategic issues and sub-issues.

The working group will, if necessary or appropriate with the help of experts from outside the working group, prioritize the most important issues and formulate an issue statement for each of the priority issues. Care should be taken to relate the issues to the party's mission, vision, political goals and societal objectives, and to the SWOT analysis. In addition, some broad goals to address the issue should be formulated. It is important that the issue statement is framed as questions or concerns that the party can do something about. Box 5.1 illustrates what a list of key strategic issues might look like.

Box 5.1

The key strategic issues of a Georgian political party

- How to effectively manage the organization when its membership is constantly expanding?
- How to carry out monitoring?
- How to design, set up and implement a public communication strategy?
- How to implement financial management?
- How to expand our international network and increase our international recognition?
- How to effectively train our members to prepare for elected or executive political office?
- How to improve the processes of recruitment and selection of candidates for elected positions?

5.2 Formulating strategies

Each of the key strategic issues must now be provided with an action-oriented plan. These issue-based plans together will form the strategic plan. The individual strategies may differ in scope, complexity and time frame. Some strategies will be directed at a part of the party or its organization, while some will cover all of the party.

The formulation of the strategies is naturally based on the information and analysis derived from the previous steps. At this point, it is clear what the issue is, why it is important and how important it is, as well as what, broadly speaking, the goals for each of the issues should be. Therefore in this phase, the working group takes on more of a coordinating and collating role than in the previous steps. Well-informed, realistic and relatively detailed strategies must be formulated, and this will involve more interaction with other units or sections within the party. This involvement can consist of individual meetings with the key stakeholders for each issue or a consultative round of interviews, for instance. Worksheet 13 provides a template that can be used to formulate the issue-based strategies. Each strategy will make clear the main underlying considerations, the specific goals, the necessary actions to be taken and what evaluation criteria are appropriate. In addition to describing the issue and the specific goals or desired outcomes, a number of items, ranging from the relatively abstract to the concrete and

easily actionable, should be addressed. These are: (1) alternative routes to get from the current issue to the desired outcome, (2) possible barriers that may stand in the way of realizing the goals, (3) initiatives that should be taken to achieve the desired outcome and (4) the key actions that flow from these initiatives. The key actions are then translated into specific steps that need to be taken within the specific time frame of the project, and a specific actor (either an individual or group) is made responsible (and accepts responsibility) for the step or cluster of steps.

In this way, it will be clear to any person who reads each strategy what the problem is, what solution has been proposed, how the proposed solution will successfully address the problem and why this solution is better than any alternative solution. The elaboration of the motivation behind the different aspects of each strategy will prove useful when the individual strategies and the plan as a whole seek formal approval and adoption in the next step.

After the individual strategies have been formulated, the working group's task is to create an overarching motivational top and tail to the strategic plan. What are the main themes of the strategies? Is there a common denominator? How can this common denominator best be framed so that it is clear to all internal stakeholders—and sparks the necessary excitement and commitment to make the desired change happen?

5.3 Reviewing and adopting the strategic plan

The working group should be inclusive in its information gathering and consultations with both internal and external stakeholders, but before the strategic plan can be implemented, it will need a formal status and the commitment of both the party's senior leadership and its executive board, as well as the broad general support of all the branches and sections of the party. In other words, the working group must 'sell' its plans to the leadership and the party, widen ownership and receive formal authorization for its choices and plans. Clear, positive and attractive communication is key to getting support from 'above' and 'below'. A positive and convincing tone will be needed in addition to all the necessary visual instruments (graphs, tables and images) to encourage the party's leadership and base to embrace the plans.

Depending on the size and structure of the party, various ways of creating wide agreement and authority might be most appropriate. One way is to first get broad agreement from the senior leadership and the executive board, for which the role of the process promoter becomes important once again. He or she should be able to present the plan, and explain and defend the choices made. It is important to have enough time, patience and flexibility to obtain the leadership's authorization. It may also be that alterations will have to be made to the plan, but these should be well argued, realistic and in line with the party's purpose and mission, or the political situation in which it finds itself. The working group should obviously take a flexible approach, as it is more valuable to have broad support and authorization from the senior leadership than to insist that all strategies are implemented just as the working group first proposed.

After formal support has been received for the content of the plans, the wider support of the rest of the party must be secured. A General Assembly or regional or thematic meetings can be used for this purpose. Without the understanding, support and dedication of the internal stakeholders at the front line, the plans are unlikely to be implemented. Here too, the possibility of having to make some changes to the plan should be left open, once again based on sound arguments or some valuable information and experience that had somehow not found its way into the planning process thus far. Worksheet 14 gives pointers for successfully and systematically completing this phase.

Box 5.2

Example: the Australian Labor Party

In February 2011, the Australian Labor Party launched the 2010 National Review, a broad-based analysis of its internal organization, in response to a weak result in the 2010 federal elections and a persisting decline in membership. Since internal strife had previously caused a change in leadership, the party commissioned a broad-based review of the party and its internal structure. Its terms of reference included:

- the need to review and modernize Labor's vision and purpose in the 21st century;
- the need to broaden participation in the party to ensure a greater say for members, supporters and stakeholders; and
- the need to improve dialogue and engagement between progressive Australians and the party, including progressive third-party organizations.

The review was conducted by a committee headed by three senior party officials who represented the left and right of the party. The committee used a broad range of consultative instruments, including organizing membership forums throughout the country, conducting targeted interviews, studying some 800 written submissions, and setting up an online 'think tank' that collected approximately 3,500 party members' and supporters' suggestions.

The committee's consultations revealed dissatisfaction with the lack of member influence over party affairs and the decline in branch involvement. The review also found that the party's membership was aging rapidly and that alliances with partner organizations, such as trade unions, had weakened.

Out of these consultations, the committee extracted 31 recommendations for the party, some of which concerned ways to attract new members and involve current members more effectively in party affairs. The review suggested making resources and party positions available for party-building and training activities. Other recommendations related to changing the party's internal rules so as to give rank-and-file members a greater say over the selection of electoral candidates and the party executive, and over the formulation of party policies.

Importantly, when the review was discussed at the party's national conference in December 2011, it received only partial support from members and party officials. Of the 31 recommendations, only 13 were adopted, partly due to disagreement between progressive and conservative forces within the party. This result demonstrated to those who were involved in writing the review that a report alone will not automatically do the job; it is equally important to have the powers that be ready and willing to adopt reforms.

The full report is available at:

<http://resources.news.com.au/files/2011/02/18/1226008/222073-labor-review-report.pdf>

6 Phase IV: Towards implementation and evaluation

After the strategic plans have been reviewed and formally adopted, preparations must be made to bring the paper plan to life. In a real sense, concerns about how to implement and realize the strategic plan have played a role in all the previous phases and activities. Nonetheless, at this point a truly practical plan of action needs to be developed. Just like in Phase I, a number of questions, such as how to break large tasks up into manageable activities and assign them to individuals and groups, come into play.

The strategy makes clear which party units or individuals are responsible for, and who should otherwise be involved in, implementing each element of the strategy. To a large extent, political parties operate in cycles from election to election; each cycle contains re-occurring stages. Therefore, a distinction should be made between one-off elements and those that should be considered part of an ongoing cycle of events that parties have to focus on continuously or at repetitive intervals. A specific and detailed list will have to be made for each plan, stating the explicit goals, actions and expected outcomes, the resources required (funds, people, technology, etc.) and the communication needs. Worksheets 15 and 16 provide guidance on these aspects. It is useful to regard the individual elements of the strategy as normal projects, for which the use of regular methodologies and guidelines for project management is advisable. It is also recommended to use software programmes for executing, managing and monitoring the realization of each element of the strategy.

Once the implementation process has been completed (hopefully on time and within budget) with the help of the project management tools, the final step in the strategic planning cycle is evaluation. This is

of crucial importance, as it offers an opportunity not only to think, plan and act strategically, but also to learn strategically. The evaluation should be broken down into two distinct parts: evaluation of the strategies themselves, and evaluation of the process by which the strategies were developed and implemented. The strengths and weaknesses of each individual strategy can now be identified, as well as the modifications that would be desirable with the benefit of hindsight. Based on these considerations, it can be determined whether a particular strategy should be maintained, revised or abandoned. A strategy can be discarded for various reasons: the issue has been resolved or effectively addressed, it was unsuccessfully implemented or changed circumstances make the strategy no longer relevant.

Evaluation should be oriented towards the process side. The strengths and weaknesses of (and any possible modifications to) the various process elements (process design, time, resources, direction, support, etc.) should be determined. Subsequently, decisions can be made on whether the various process-related elements should remain unchanged, be replaced with new or revised elements and principles, or be abandoned altogether.

These evaluations will provide valuable information about *what* should be done in any future cycles, and *how*. This approach can help improve the quality of both the process and future strategies of each cycle. Worksheets 17 and 18 provide guidance on the strategy and process evaluations. Annex IV provides guidelines for interviews with the main stakeholders after the planning process has been concluded. It helps to look back and identify successes and areas for improvement in future cycles of strategic planning.

Box 6.1

Example: Peru and the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA)

Peru's April 2001 general elections—the country's first elections that were deemed free and fair by all political forces after Fujimori's decade in power—positioned its oldest party, APRA, as the first opposition force in the legislature. APRA's candidate narrowly lost a presidential run-off held in June, obtaining more than 5 million votes, about 30 times the party's vote share only a year earlier. Seven months after returning from an eight-year exile, party leader and former president Alan García seized the opportunity to propose a challenge to his fellow partisans—internal party reform for keeping that support:

The great challenge facing the party is to keep its relationship with this immense citizen force, because APRA's social gravitation depends on it (...) We must be aware that only a modern and open social message can help maintain a favourable attitude among Peruvians toward the party. Otherwise, the party's electoral support or acceptance could be reduced again. (...) This is the first step in the modernization and re-launch of APRA to society (Letter to the Comrades, 23 July 2001).

Ever since its foundation in 1930, the party had functioned with an early 20th century trade-union organizational structure: cells, committees and secretariats with functions dealing with discipline, organization, culture, ethics, treasury, etc. The inward-looking set-up was appropriate during periods of underground activity, yet under democracy, citizens became less attached to ideologies and classical political mobilization and showed low trust in political parties. Thus the party needed to open up and reach out to the citizenry in a different way. The party leadership therefore tried to place its strategic planning process in the wider context of Peruvian democratic developments.

The call for modernization set off a review process of the party's structure, led by the Secretariat of Organization, which involved a nationwide deliberation of different options and ideas: seven regional assemblies gathered about 1,500 national and subnational leaders who had previously consulted the party's grass roots. The Secretariat distilled discussions into a set of recommendations.

The process concluded that the party's set-up had become bureaucratic, vertical and top-down, centralized and obsolete. It proposed a new structure that was organized along three different dimensions of the party's life:

1. institutional dimension, to deal with internal matters;
2. social dimension, to interact with groups of society without formally incorporating them; and
3. governmental dimension, to permanently keep track of government activity and update plans and programmes.

The recommendations were translated into a proposal for a new party constitution that was then approved by the 55th party plenary in September 2003 and finally the 22nd national congress in June 2004. The social and governmental dimensions were the new elements, and their heads would be part of the top decision-making body: the National Executive Committee.

The new social dimension encompassed five directorates: women, professionals, workers, CSOs and popular organizations. The state dimension consists of 17 directorates that mirror nearly all cabinet posts—similar to a shadow cabinet.

The new party constitution also created a permanent National Commission for Strategic Planning with a mandate to provide the national leadership with strategic advice. This demonstrated that APRA considered strategic planning to be a permanent task of the party rather than a one-off.

The new set-up was welcomed, although the timing of its implementation was challenging: general elections were around the corner in April 2006 and the party had to organize a campaign. It eventually won a plurality in the legislature and the presidency for the second time in its 76-year existence. This success meant that new responsibilities obviously became priority. Leaders acknowledged that implementation of the internal reforms lost its momentum as the party had to consecutively tackle somewhat competing objectives within a two-year timeframe. While carrying out its modernization,

it also had to prepare an electoral campaign, build a broad social and political coalition to support its new mandate, and govern effectively while articulating its refreshed programmatic identity: as an advocate of economic modernization with social justice.

Five years later, after completing its second mandate and joining the opposition, the party's challenge of internal modernization under a new leadership persists.

More information is available at:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Partido-Aprista-Peruano-Comit%C3%A9-Ejecutivo-Nacional/110211385672511>

7 Strategic planning in Georgia (2010–2011) and Mozambique (2012)

This tool refers to the strategic planning processes initiated and guided by NIMD in 2010–2011 and in 2012. The aim of the comprehensive programme was to strengthen Georgian political parties and assist them in their institutional development. More concretely, NIMD offered the political parties the tools and support to develop a more strategic way of thinking about themselves as political parties and party organizations, and to formulate strategic plans for the medium and long term.

This chapter describes the process, presents the choices that were made and the considerations that played a role, and describes the difficulties encountered along the way as well as the results achieved and the lessons learned. The chapter also discusses a number of examples from Mozambique, where NIMD used the same methodology in a strategic planning process that began in early 2012.

7.1 Objectives and motivation

NIMD's initiative in 2010 to assist political parties in Georgia with a comprehensive strategic planning process was motivated by Georgia's political environment, which was characterized by various types of increasing pressure on political parties and demands for better management and greater public accountability. Georgian political parties faced challenges from more active and vocal stakeholders, voters, the media and resource providers, as well as heightened uncertainty about the future. With parliamentary and presidential elections approaching, the political parties faced pressure to reinvent or re-engineer themselves in order to remain relevant and increase their support. This made strategic planning to improve parties' positioning vis-à-vis their stakeholders and the wider external environment, and to improve internal performance (financial management, information technology, human resource management) both relevant and timely.

"One of our major discoveries was that we used to think only tactically and never strategically. We kept our focus on projects and events, while completely missing out on the common organizational objectives"

A strategic planning team member

"Before joining the programme, we had our vision of short and long-term goals. However, as a result of the workshops we reassessed our principles and values completely. When we engaged in the strategic planning process there was a natural realization of the need for change and new ways of working, and above all to shift ourselves to a completely new phase of organizational team development"

A strategic planning team leader

This context is in some ways specific to the situation in Georgia. In other ways, however, the aims and motivations apply elsewhere. Building up organizational capacity and strategically steering long-term planning makes sense in any political system. In addition, questions about funding, internal management, the mobilization of expertise, and outreach to members and regional branches are relevant in all democracies.

In Mozambique, an additional motivation for embarking on a process of strategic planning was the drive to ensure that funding from external donors was used more effectively and systematically by the political parties. Rather than spending money on a short-term or one-off project-by-project basis, thinking about their party more strategically—and with an eye on the longer term—would help the party organizations use donor funds more coherently and effectively. Basing plans for programmes and activities on solid and systematic planning might increase the chances of attracting more funds from multiple donors.

7.2 Timing

NIMD's Georgia programme started two years before important parliamentary and presidential elections and ran for one year. This proved to be good timing, given that the parties were at a point where they felt that strong improvements in external positioning and internal performance were needed if they wanted to survive until the next election and achieve good election results. The programme allowed enough time to conduct thorough self-analyses and environmental analyses, identify strategic issues and priorities, and formulate and implement strategies. Looking back, the political parties all agreed that the correct time frame was chosen. One strategic planning team leader observed that the timing was an important element of the project's success. The participating parties found that the period between elections was the perfect moment to start strategic planning.

Here too, a reference to the Mozambican case is in order. The strategic planning process in Mozambique also started two years before parliamentary and presidential elections took place in order to give parties sufficient time and attention for internal discussions. The process in Mozambique was also guided by the party's internal cycles, for instance internal elections for leadership positions or other important decisions taken during party congresses. Therefore, in the Mozambican case, choosing the right timing involved taking each individual party's internal electoral cycle into account.

Therefore the most appropriate time to start strategic planning may differ from one party to another. This need not jeopardize the overall success of the programme. When working with multiple parties, however, the facilitating organization (e.g., NIMD) should start talking to all the parties at the same time about the programme and the party's participation. Together with the parties, the facilitators can then discuss what would be the best starting point, considering the individual party's needs and internal cycle. This approach will foster inclusiveness and prevent possible tensions or unnecessary concerns from individual political parties about preferences or the availability of resources should one party find it more fitting to start later than other parties.

7.3 Process

"Our sceptical attitude at the initial stage was premised by our expectation that the NIMD project would be just the same as other training projects by various other actors we have been involved with through the years. In the end the process proved to be the opposite: we now have a sustainable plan and our mission statement, and we are more focused on our goals and policy priorities"

A member of a strategic planning team

Inclusiveness lies at the heart of NIMD's approach to assistance provision. Any party that meets objective, rational criteria, regardless of its ideological orientation or other political considerations, should be included in the programme. NIMD originally selected seven Georgian political parties to participate in this particular programme, based on their results in the 2008 parliamentary elections and the 2010 local elections. The process captured the relevant party actors in Georgia's political arena, including the ruling party and opposition parties, with a wide variety of ideological orientations and stages of organizational development. In alphabetical order, the parties selected were: the Christian Democratic Movement (the largest parliamentary opposition party), extra-parliamentary opposition parties Georgia's Way, the Labour Party of Georgia, the New Rights Party of Georgia, Our Georgia – Free Democrats Party, The Republican Party of Georgia and the ruling party, the United National Movement. In Mozambique, NIMD worked with the three parties with representation in parliament: Frelimo (Mozambican Liberation Front), Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance) and the Mozambican Democratic Movement.

"As our party was established only three years ago, we haven't done work similar to strategic planning before. With the help of the consultants, we were able to analyse all the layers of our organization's structure and the process allowed us to assess our resources and status quo"

A strategic planning team leader

The process was demand driven for some of the political parties. They specifically asked NIMD for assistance with strategic planning in the period preceding the launch of the programme. For the other parties, the process was supply driven: they

had not specifically asked to participate in the process. NIMD offered all parties the same package at the same time.

It was easy to start work with the parties that had asked for assistance. However the other parties had to be approached, and it was necessary to explain the ideas behind the process and activities. Most of the parties were sceptical about the nature and potential outcome of the process. Looking back, some party leaders recalled that they had initially been concerned that they 'would end up drafting a strategic plan only on paper and just for the sake of staying engaged in the programme'. In some cases, it took considerable time and persuasion to convince the parties of the usefulness and benefits of the package and its contents.

Considerable time and effort were needed from NIMD's staff to get all parties and their leaderships committed to the programme. In the case of the ruling party in Georgia, the party officials were by no means negative about participating, but recognized that it would be very difficult to actively follow and sustain the process. They therefore agreed that it would be more sensible to let its youth wing participate, since assistance with strategic planning was also welcome there. In this way, full inclusiveness was achieved by maintaining a dialogue, and where necessary, agreeing to go with alternatives that were almost equivalent to the original plan, and thus in accordance with the essence of the NIMD programme's principles of multiparty inclusivity. A degree of flexibility in the time frame and developing tailored solutions to legitimate hurdles was effective in maximizing inclusiveness.

Trust, good personal relations and NIMD's good reputation among the Georgian and Mozambican parties as a reliable, strongly inclusive and non-partisan assistance provider proved to be the main factors that persuaded the parties and their leaders to get on board. In fact, trust, reliability and good personal connections appear to have played a greater role than the perceived benefits of participation. In other words, at the initiation stage, process management appears to have been at least as important as any of the programme's substantive qualities. NIMD did not make transparency mandatory in all aspects of the planning process vis-à-vis the con-

sultants and NIMD itself. There was ample room for the parties to discuss a number of issues without the presence of the consultants. The role of NIMD was truly facilitating: the methodology, logistical support and training were offered, but the parties could keep some issues confidential if they wanted to. Some parties appreciated the discretion they were offered but shared virtually all of their weaknesses and deliberations, while others kept a number of issues to themselves. The benefit of this approach was that the level of trust in NIMD increased. In addition, it created a discreet setting in which the parties felt comfortable discussing even the most sensitive matters within the framework of strategic planning.

7.4 External experts

From the programme's inception, NIMD drew in a group of international and local experts to help guide the processes in Georgia and Mozambique. In Georgia, NIMD convened a two-day seminar with a lecturer/trainer in the field of strategic management for the public and non-profit sector and the group of five carefully selected Georgian experts who were to assume the role of consultants vis-à-vis the seven participating political parties. The seminar discussed the dominant models of strategic planning and formulated a process plan for the programme.

"We had a very high opinion of the consultants even before the NIMD project, since they are well-known experts in our society"

A strategic planning team leader

The consultants were handpicked using a number of crucial criteria. All had to have a neutral political profile and the skills and authority to guide the process with the political parties. Numerous other fields of expertise and experience were needed, although not every member of the team needed to possess all of them. In Georgia, the consultants had backgrounds in political science, organizational psychology, election monitoring and business strategy. In Mozambique, the consultants had backgrounds in CSOs, human resource management and political science. An effort was made to include the following areas of expertise in the group of consultants: (1) demonstrable experience of strategic planning; (2) in-depth knowledge of the national political, electoral and constitutional systems; (3) up-to-date knowledge

of formal and informal political relations and current issues in the political arena and (4) knowledge of organizational management and organizational culture. As a collective, the consultants possessed all the necessary knowledge, skills and values required to successfully assist the parties.

The commitment and participation of the parties also depended to a considerable degree on their impression of the consultants they would be working with. A hint of doubt concerning the non-partisanship of the consultants (or their integrity or confidentiality) could have led the political parties to decline to participate in the programme. In Georgia, not all the five selected consultants worked with all parties. NIMD matched consultants to parties according to their judgement of who would be more trusted by, and acceptable to, each party or group of parties. In Mozambique, the three selected consultants worked with all three parties, but in varying compositions and teams, depending on the topic or required area of expertise.

7.5 Strategic planning working groups

The first activity the parties undertook with their consultants was to set up an internal strategic planning working group. Most parties set up a working group of six to ten individuals. Without exception, the parties actively tried to create a balance between men and women, and people with varying points of view and valuable inputs to offer.

The following balance was aimed for:

Longstanding party experience	Young people with fresh ideas
Central party officials	Representatives of regional branches
Senior party executives	Entry-level volunteers
Political figureheads	Back-office staff
Women	Men

In most cases, the party's leader, secretary general or Central Committee member led the working group. Close connections with and frequent coordination between the working group and the party's senior leadership turned out to be important in getting relevant inputs and securing continued leadership backing.

The parties that chose to have a less inclusive working group regarded this as an area for improvement in a future cycle. According to one member of a strategic planning team: 'If our working group had been more inclusive, that would have helped us finish the plan sooner than we did'. A party that included only the senior leadership on the working group also believes that a more diverse composition would have improved the process. According to the leader of that strategic planning team: 'middle management and staff members are better positioned to be in charge of the daily management of the process'.

Figure 7.1

The organizational structure of the programme

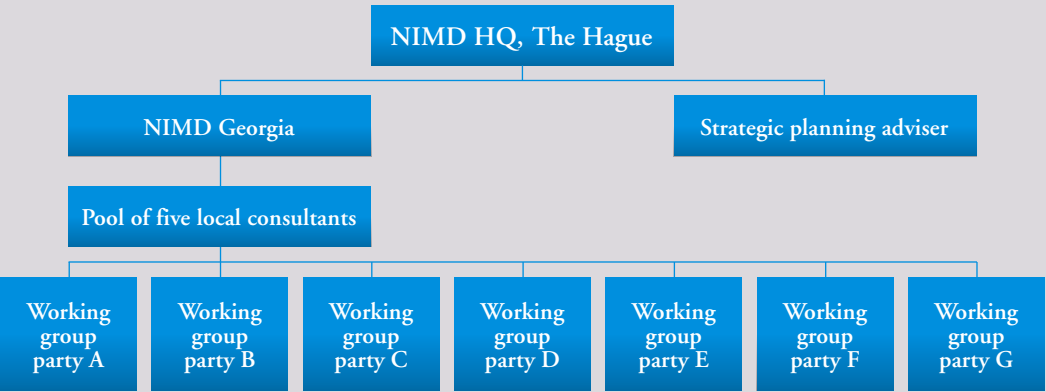


Figure 7.1 shows the organizational structure of the programme. The pool of five consultants split up into one pair and one group of three, and the political parties were divided amongst both teams of consultants. In Mozambique, where the party system consists of three political parties, it seemed more than adequate to work with three consultants; each political party worked with a pair of consultants, but in varying compositions (i.e., all three consultants worked with all three parties). It should be feasible in most cases to form a pair of consultants that is acceptable to each party in terms of trust, impartiality and/or prior acquaintance.

7.6 Methodology

The main substance of the methodology was internal and external analysis and drafting the plan. For each step, an extensive package of materials was made available on organizational structures, intervention principles, scripts and guidelines, and implementation logistics and logic.

“Although we as a party and working group were sceptical at first, the process proved contrary to our expectations in every respect, since the SWOT analysis opened up opportunities to increase internal morale and achieve better results”

A member of the strategic planning team

“Having the workshops outside Tbilisi had a clearly positive impact, since only there were we not disturbed by the routine, so we could reach a maximum level of focus and concentration. In this way, we were not distracted”

A member of the strategic planning team

For both the analyses and the drafting, NIMD in Georgia offered each of the parties an introductory meeting in the capital, Tbilisi, followed by a two-day workshop with consultants and NIMD staff. In Mozambique, the workshops were organized outside the capital city to ensure minimal disruptions and the maximum attention of the working group members. The purpose of the workshops was to explain, discuss and work on the various actions. These workshops were organized at different times for the different parties, depending on the speed at which the party worked. All the workshops were held at a conference resort a considerable distance from the capital, and therefore involved overnight stays.

Reflecting on the effectiveness of the programme, many party representatives identified the fact that the working groups were taken away from the busy political centre and their day-to-day dynamics and routines as an important factor in their success.

During the first workshops, the working groups worked together with the consultants and NIMD staff to establish a vision for the future, carry out a stakeholder analysis, clarify the mission, articulate their values, and analyse internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats.

After the workshop, the working group completed the actions discussed during the retreat. NIMD staff and the consultants were constantly reachable to answer questions and provide support and procedural advice. At each of the five phases, NIMD and the consultants held a one-day meeting in the capital to further assist the participants with the worksheets and any other questions or issues that had arisen. At no point did either the consultants or NIMD staff try to steer the substantive outputs from the discussions, analyses or planning. The consultants encouraged the working groups to consult widely and seek input and support from sections of the party beyond those represented in the working group. Different parties tried to do this in different ways. The more effort a party put into broadening the range of internal stakeholders involved, the greater the impact of the strategic planning process proved to be. For instance, one party organized two national committee meetings to discuss the content of the worksheets. Looking back, they commented: ‘It was not only a planning process. It promoted active interparty discussion as well.’

“The strategic planning process served as an opportunity to discover gaps in our organizational structure. As a result, we now employ evaluation and monitoring groups in our daily work. Furthermore, we became more transparent to our members and now the entire organization shares common values”

A member of the strategic planning team

Once the parties had completed the activities in Phase I, a new workshop was organized at the conference venue. This time, the parties worked with the consultants and NIMD staff on drafting the

plan. This involved identifying and framing strategic issues, formulating strategies, reviewing and adopting the strategic plan, and developing an effective implementation process.

“We came to the conclusion that our communication with the public was too complex. Furthermore, the issue of membership fees is crucial to us and we have to develop a membership fee administration system”

A strategic planning team leader

The parties in Georgia completed the planning and drafting activities in six to eight months, while in Mozambique it took about four to six months. The outputs were ambitious but realistic strategic plans that had the support of the party leadership as well as other internal stakeholders, and implementation plans that enabled the parties to make their plans a concrete reality. However, perhaps more importantly, most political parties reported that participating in the programme had fundamentally changed their way of thinking about their party and the party organization. A more comprehensive schematic overview of the activities, logistical aspects and resource (time and money) requirements in the Georgian process is provided in Annex III.

Looking back, the parties that participated in the strategic planning programme felt they had benefited much more than they had originally expected. In addition to the many core aims of the process, they noted some lasting changes in the party that its members had gone through as a result of their strategic planning efforts. They reported that the process encouraged teamwork throughout the party organization and stimulated active discussion. For many parties, this was the first time they had been able to openly discuss their challenges and problems in a structured and disciplined manner, with positive outcomes. In addition, many parties observed that the process had given the members of the working group some space for self-realization.

“Our participation in the project, and familiarizing ourselves with strategic planning, introduced us to completely different forms of thinking about the kind of party we want to be and the way we run our party organization”

A strategic planning team leader

Several parties reported lasting effects. Realizing that strategic planning is a constant process that requires ongoing updating, one party created a small unit that meets each month to discuss strategic planning. Another party decided to use its strategic plan as a basis to try to involve international donor organizations in funding its future implementation plans. According to one strategic planning team leader, ‘We now see opportunities to involve more actors in the realization of our goals.’ In Mozambique, NIMD facilitated donor meetings for the political parties at which they could present their strategic plans to the international community and attract their support.

An example of the way in which the political parties felt better equipped to cope with new developments in their political and organizational environment was provided by the arrival of a new and influential actor on the Georgian political landscape, the Georgia-born billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, who sought to co-operate with several political parties in opposition to the incumbent president. This newcomer had serious political ambitions, and he immediately affected the positioning of the existing parties by openly endorsing some of them and offering his cooperation and financial backing. As one strategic planning team member concluded: ‘Despite the fact that the political landscape has changed vastly recently, we still have confidence in our future. We have firmly set goals, priorities and target groups, and these are part of the strategic plan we adopted.’

For the participating political parties, the strategic planning process represented a new way of looking at their organization, their environment and the road ahead. For many of the people involved, this meant stepping out of their comfort zone and opening themselves up to the unknown. Strategic thinking was not previously part of the parties’ organizational cultures. In order for strategic planning to be successful in the long run, it should not be a one-off exercise. It is likely that plans and strategies will have to be reassessed and fine-tuned as time passes, and that the quality of strategic planning will increase with practice. In Georgia, NIMD followed up the planning process with planning strategy review meetings about one year after the adoption of the strategic plans. It intends to hold such review meetings periodically in the future.

Annexes

Annex I

From generic tool to country-specific manual

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the tool presented in this publication is by necessity a rather generic instrument; the aim is to make the tool generally applicable as a starting point for strategic planning for political parties in all parts of the world. However, experience has demonstrated that for a strategic planning process to be successful, a thorough knowledge and understanding of the specificities 'on the ground' is crucial. In every country there is a different state structure, a different political-legal system, a different level of economic development, and a different nature and level of competition in the political party landscape. All these factors have an important impact on determining the ideal way of developing, framing and executing a process of strategic planning.

In addition, history, language and culture should not be underestimated when it comes to strategic planning. A country's (recent) political history may be very important for the range of possibilities of how to conduct strategic planning. Specific wording and concepts may have ambiguous, negative or inappropriate meanings, and information and activities may be accompanied by very sensitive issues.

In order to transpose the generic tool to the specificities of a given country, it is very important for the assistance provider, the local partner or local staff, and the prospective consultants to sit down and thoroughly discuss the overall meaning of the tool in a specific context, as well as the suitability and applicability of each step, activity and formulation in that environment. This discussion will result in a translation into the national setting that is not only linguistic, but also cultural and political/institutional. It may be that one or more steps will have to be redesigned or left out, or that specific steps or activities have to be added to the tool. The principle

behind this exercise should always be the clarity, relevance, acceptability and user friendliness of the tool for the political parties in that specific context.

In Georgia and Mozambique, this 'translation' was performed as follows. At the outset of the entire process, the assistance provider, prospective consultants and an external trainer convened a two-day workshop in which the trainer explained the underlying goals of the planning process and described the full methodology. A very open and thorough discussion followed, in which the country experts (local staff of the assistance provider and prospective consultants) shared their concerns about the potential limitations of the methodology. Next, the team went through the full methodology, translating the steps and amending the wording and activities.

The output of this working session was a separate 'manual' of about 30 pages in which the generic tool was transposed to fit the particular local needs and circumstances. This manual was distributed to the participating political parties and functioned as the real guidelines for the consultants and political parties throughout the planning process.

Annex II

Worksheets

Worksheet 1: Pre-departure checklist

A. Possible difficulties, costs and benefits of the capacity-building process

What are the major possible internal and external problems for a successful strategic planning process?

(Examples: scarce financial resources, difficulty collecting the necessary information, lack of priority due to important events within the party, complexity, uncertainty regarding government actions/plans).

What can be done to minimize such difficulties?

Possible internal difficulty <i>(E.g., Lack of priority because of upcoming party congress)</i>	How to minimize the possible difficulty <i>(E.g., Clear commitment of the working group members, intensive internal communication, clear division of work, effective time management)</i>
Possible external difficulty <i>(E.g., Destabilization of national political situation; lack of priority because of necessary involvement in annual government budget procedure)</i>	How to minimize the possible difficulty <i>(E.g., Stay alert, committed and stick to agreed time frame; make sure that the working group members are available to do the work during the planning period)</i>

List the expected financial and other costs (e.g., material costs, personnel costs) of the planning process.
How can these costs be managed and controlled? (Examples: strict time and financial management)

Financial and other costs <i>(E.g., Time, expenses)</i>	Ways to manage costs <i>(E.g., Effective time management, effective financial management)</i>
---	---

List the expected benefits (direct and indirect) of the planning process.

(Examples: better internal coordination, more effective use of resources, better oversight and greater sense of ownership, better stakeholder relationships, increased involvement of all layers of the party, clearer goal achievement, better accountability).

How can these benefits be enhanced? (Examples: involving regional branches as much as possible, prioritizing and 'picking our battles')

Benefits	Ways to enhance benefits

B. Is the party ready for take-off

Determine whether the party is ready to start.

Readiness criteria	Criterion met?	
	Yes	No
Commitment of political party leadership		
Focal point appointed		
Resources to do the planning are available (time, people, money, office, equipment)		
Does the working group have the competency and authority to take the necessary decisions?		
Are we sure the planning process will not conflict with other processes in which the party is involved?		
Now is the right time to initiate the process		
Do you believe that all the relevant conditions to make the planning process a success are met?		
If no, indicate what is lacking:		

C: Planning the planning effort

Whose plan is it? (This question is key in determining the scope of the plan and who needs to be involved in the process).

What period of time will the plan cover (keep the time horizon realistic; otherwise, the credibility and usefulness of the plan will be undermined).

- 2 years;
- 5 years; or
- other (specify).

What type of challenges do you hope the planning process, and the plan itself, will address?

Who is the driving force behind the planning process?

- senior leadership;
- middle leadership; or
- staff.

Who is leading the strategic planning project team?

Who is on the working group?

- senior leadership;
- middle leadership;
- staff;
- regional branches; or
- members.

What kind and size of strategic planning team work (or will work) best in your party? Think about who should be won over and committed to the plan at the end of the process, and what that means for the composition of the strategic planning team.

Who should be involved in developing the plan? Think about who should work with and be committed to the plan at the end of the process, and what that means for involvement in the strategic planning effort.

Who should (or will need to) be involved in the review of the plan prior to and following any formal adoption process?

Who are the audiences for the plan? To whom will it be marketed?

What settings or forums are available for dialogue and deliberation as the planning process proceeds? Where will the strategic planning team meet? What kinds of forums are necessary for engaging others in the strategic planning process, and where and how might they be held?

What type of written plan do we envision?

- short executive summary;
- longer and more detailed plan that excludes most tactical and operational elements;
- a detailed plan including tactical and operational elements; or
- other.

What is the expected time frame for the planning process?

- 6 months;
- 12 months; or
- other.

What roles will the consultants play (group process facilitators, content experts, research experts, communications experts)?

How will you coordinate with and use consultants and process experts?

What steps will you use in your planning process? Review these steps with the people who are involved, and refine them as needed. You may want to use project management software for this question.

Steps / tasks	Persons / groups involved	Schedule

What resources do you need to start and complete the effort, and where will you get them?

Type	Description / quantity	Source
Budget		
People		
Information		
Facilities for meetings		
Consultants		
Volunteers		
Other (specify):		

On completing the strategic planning process, what criteria should be used to judge its effectiveness?

Criteria to judge the effectiveness of the strategic planning process
1.
2.
3.
4. (...)

After implementing the strategic plan, what criteria should be used to judge its effectiveness?

Criteria to judge the effectiveness of the strategic plan
1.
2.
3.
4. (...)

Worksheet 2:

Understanding the party's present position

In order to determine the status quo before take-off, discuss the following questions and answer them in a relatively concise way. Some of these topics may be sensitive. There is no need to document the answers in a formal way, or to share them with the consultants or the assistance providers. It is recommended, however, that these matters are thought about and discussed internally.

1. Responsibilities and competencies	
	What are the party's general responsibilities and competencies?
	What rights and constraints are there in the legal framework that are relevant to the scope of the planning process?
	What legal regulations are there on political party funding and fundraising?
2. Structure, governance and funding	
	How is the party governed internally?
	What are the relations between the different sections of the party; how do they coordinate and how are they accountable?
	How is party membership organized?
	What are the party's current sources of funding? Roughly, how large is the share of each source of total party funding?
	What do members get in return for their fees?
	What is the state of internal party democracy?
3. Operational aspects of the party	
	How is the party organization run?
	Who is on the payroll and how are tasks divided?
	What are the processes concerning party administration? How well are these working?
4. Looking ahead to the planning process	
	What, at this point, are perceived to be the five main strategic issues that will have to be addressed in the course of this process?
	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	What aspects of the party organization should remain outside the scope of the planning process?
	What aspects of the party organization should be improved on any account?

Worksheet 3:
Sketching a vision

A vision describes how the political party should look after it has successfully implemented its strategies and achieved its full potential.

A vision statement answers the question: where and what do we want to be?

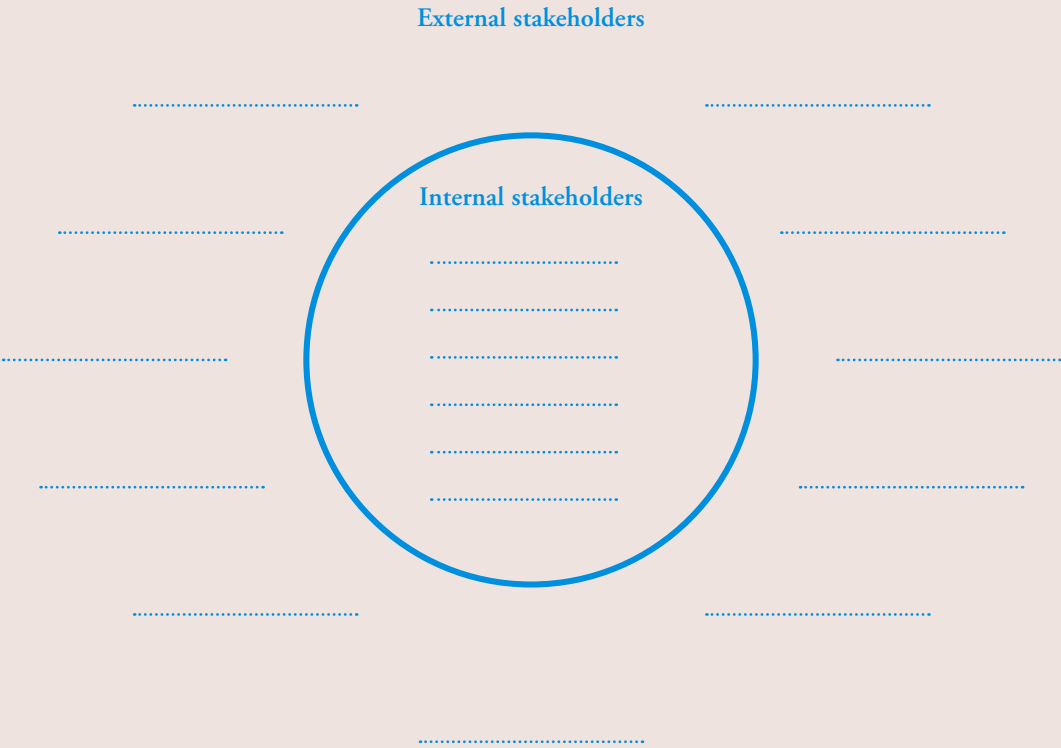
What might the party look like or be in the future, given expected opportunities and challenges, as well as anticipated or conceivable actions?

We suggest that people work individually to draft a vision, a vision statement and the answers to the above question, and then complete the table in a group discussion.

Aspect of the political party	Current situation	Desired situation in three years
Mission or role		
People		
Structure		
Activities		
Processes		
Culture		
External legitimacy and support		
...		
...		
...		
...		

Worksheet 4:
Identifying the party's stakeholders

To begin a stakeholder analysis, list the political party's stakeholders. Be as inclusive as possible. Later, you or your group might consider deciding how important each stakeholder is in terms of: its positive or negative impact on the political party; its strategies; and its ability to fulfil its mission, carry out its mandates and create public value. A stakeholder analysis carried out early in the process can help you decide who should be involved in the process and when, how and why. In addition, stakeholder analyses are likely to be needed in identifying issues, formulating strategy, reviewing the plan, adopting the plan and implementing the plan.



An external stakeholder is any person, group or organization outside the political party that can make a claim on the party's attention, resources or outputs, or that is affected by the party's output. For example, external stakeholders may be voters, an electoral committee, assistance providers or competing political parties.

1. Rank your stakeholders in terms of their role and importance to your organization.
2. Identify all the criteria the stakeholders might use to assess the functioning of the party organization. Write these criteria in the top row of the columns (example criteria are provided).
3. Now, for each criterion, grade on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent) your judgement of each stakeholder's perception of the functioning of the party organization.

Worksheet 6: Internal stakeholder analysis

An internal stakeholder is any person, group or organization inside the political party that can make a claim on the party's attention, resources or outputs, or that is affected by the party's outputs. For example, internal stakeholders include senior party members, staff, regional branches and elected representatives.

For each internal stakeholder group listed in Worksheet 4, complete the table below.

1. Rank your stakeholders in terms of their role and importance to your organization.
2. Identify all the criteria the stakeholders might use to assess the functioning of the party organization. Write these criteria in the top row of the columns.
3. Now, for each criterion, grade on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent) your judgement of each stakeholder's perception of the functioning of the party organization.

Worksheet 7:
Mission statement

A mission statement should clarify the party’s purpose and indicate why it is doing what it does. In other words, it should answer the question: ‘Ultimately, what are we here to do’. Group members should first complete this worksheet individually. After the whole group has discussed the results, an individual or a small group could be charged with drafting a new mission statement for review by the key stakeholders. Do not be surprised if a new strategic issue emerges from your discussion of the party’s mission statement.

1. What, if any, is our current mission statement? What does it say about who we are, what our purpose is, who we serve and how we are unique?

2. In general, what value does our party add to society? How does this differ from the roles of other societal organizations and competing political parties?

3. What would happen in society if our party ceased to exist?

4. What is our philosophy? What are our core values?

5. Is our current mission statement dated, and, if so, how?

6. What changes to the mission statement would I propose?

7. Examine your answers to the above questions and draft a mission statement.

Worksheet 8:
Values statement

A values statement should articulate how the party conducts itself. The statement should answer the question: ‘How do we want to treat others, and how do we want to be treated ourselves’. Do not be surprised if a new strategic issue emerges from your discussion of your party’s values system. We suggest that people work individually to answer the first three items and then complete the worksheet through group discussion.

List, in the following table, what you consider to be your party’s key values at the present time. Note that a political party’s values are most obvious in *how* it does things and *with whom* it does them, not in *what* it does. Note also that the key values may not necessarily be positive (examples of desirable values include honesty, integrity, caring, trust and respect).

After a group discussion, give a concise definition of what these values mean. Finally, describe how these values are expressed in the daily activities of your party.

Value	Definition	How is this value expressed in our party’s daily activities?

Worksheet 9:
Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities
and threats

In a brainstorming session, identify all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on a flip chart using the worksheet below. Make a clear distinction between the following aspects of the party-organization:

Mission and vision

Successful organizations have a clear understanding of their mandates, and they have established and communicated an inspiring organizational mission and/or vision to their stakeholders.

Budget, human resources and information technology

Successful parties and managers achieve their mandates, fulfil their mission and create public value by effectively managing their resources.

Communications

Successful parties transmit clear messages, have well-developed communication networks and have adequate forums to promote discussion and dialogue.

- Messages are concise, targeted toward specific stakeholders and designed to produce specific responses.

- Networks effectively convey appropriate information to targeted stakeholders, both internal and external.
- Forums engage the right stakeholders in appropriate ways to foster necessary discussion and dialogue.

Leadership, management, structure, processes and culture

Successful parties enjoy effective leadership and competent management and organize themselves strategically.

- Leadership means making sure the organization is doing the right things.
- Management means making sure those things are being done correctly.
- The organization's structure should feature well-defined relationships horizontally and vertically, formally and informally, which will help the organization carry out specific strategic initiatives.
- The party's processes should be designed to produce desired outputs effectively.
- The party's culture should foster a commitment to the mission, meeting the mandates, creating public value and satisfying key stakeholders.

	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
	—	—
	—	—
	—	—
	—	—
External	Opportunities	Threats / Challenges
	—	—
	—	—
	—	—
	—	—

Worksheet 10: Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Fill out the worksheet below to derive a complete list of your party's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Then discuss, and place each cluster of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths in order of priority or importance.

- Internal strengths are resources or capabilities that help a party accomplish its mandates or mission and create public value (examples: highly skilled staff, good morale, adequate resources, well-connected board, excellent information technology system, effective performance management, effective communications system).
- Internal weaknesses are deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder a party's ability to fulfil its responsibilities, its mission and create public value (examples: poor internal and external communications, unclear mission or vision, insufficient pay scales, low morale, inadequate resources).
- External opportunities are outside factors or situations that a party can take advantage of to better fulfil its mission and create public value (examples: new funding sources, a chance to modify outdated formal responsibilities, an opportunity to pay off or refinance debt).
- External threats or challenges are outside factors that can negatively affect a party—making it harder for the party to fulfil its responsibilities or mission and create public value (examples: loss of funding from external sources, new responsibilities for which there are no funds, poor organizational image or reputation, lack of public support).

	Description	Way to...	
Strengths	1.		... preserve or enhance each strength
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
Opportunities	1.		... minimize or overcome each weakness
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
Weaknesses	1.		... take advantage of each opportunity
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		
Threats or challenges	1.		... overcome each threat or challenge
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
	6.		

Worksheet 11:
Master list of key strategic issues

- 1. Prepare a master list of key issues on a large flipchart. In the worksheet below, some potential issues are listed as examples.
- 2. After the list has been constructed, discuss the order in which the issues should be listed: for example, order of overall importance, logical order or the order in which they should be addressed.
- 3. Answer the questions in the other columns of the worksheet below: (1) Why is this an issue? (2) What are the consequences of not addressing this issue? And (3) What should our goals be in addressing this issue?

	What is the issue?	Why is this an issue?	What happens if we do not address the issue?	What should be our goals in addressing the issue?
1.	Low quality of our back-office staff			
2.	Low member involvement			
3.	Poor internal information flows			
4.	Insecure funding			
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Worksheet 12: Distinguishing between operational and strategic issues

For each issue on the master list of strategic issues, determine the extent to which it is strategic or operational. Operational issues can be addressed in a relatively simple and straightforward way. Strategic issues should be elaborated on in the following worksheets.

Issue:

	Operational ←	→ Strategic	
1. Is the issue worthy of the attention of the party's leadership?	No		Yes
2. When will the strategic issue's challenge or opportunity confront you?	Right now	Next year	2 years or more from now
3. How broad an impact will the issue have?	Single unit or division		Entire organization
4. How large is your party's financial risk or opportunity?	Minor (<10% of budget)	Moderate (10-15% of budget)	Major (>15% of budget)
5. Are strategies for issue resolution likely to require:			
a. Significant amendments to formal statutes or legal regulations?	No		Yes
b. Significant staff changes?	No		Yes
c. Major facilities changes?	No		Yes
d. Major changes in stakeholder relationships?	No		Yes
6. How apparent is the best approach for issue resolution?	Obvious, ready to implement		Wide open
7. What is the lowest level of management that can decide how to deal with this issue?	Line staff supervisor		Head of major department
8. What are the probable consequences of not addressing the issue?	Inconvenience, inefficiency	Significant loss of credibility / electoral support	Major loss of credibility / electoral support
9. How many other groups are affected by this issue and must be involved in its resolution?	None	1-3	4 or more
10. How sensitive or 'charged' is this issue relative to community, social, political and cultural values?	Benign	Touchy	Dynamite

Final assessment: the issue is ☐ Primarily operational ☐ Primarily strategic

Worksheet 13:
Key questions for identifying strategies

Fill out a separate worksheet for each of the issues that, based on the assessment in the previous worksheet, were defined as strategic issues. Be open to all ideas and build on the ideas of others. Challenge ideas (and the issue) in a constructive and positive way. Take time to fully explore possible strategies.

The strategic issue is:

1. Our issue-specific goals (or desired outcomes) are (or should be):

2. What are some practical solutions we might pursue to address this issue and achieve our goal(s) or outcome(s)?
3. What are the possible barriers to achieving these solutions?

4. What major initiatives might we pursue to achieve these solutions directly or to achieve them indirectly by overcoming the barriers?

5. What are the key actions (within existing resources of people and money) that must be taken this year to implement the major initiatives?

6. What specific steps could be taken in the next six months to implement the major initiatives, who would be responsible for taking them and what resources would be needed? For this question, use the worksheet below.

Issue:	Step	Actor responsible	Necessary resources
1.	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		
2.	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		
3.	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		

Issue:	Step	Actor responsible	Necessary resources
4.	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		
5.	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		
6.	A		
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		

Worksheet 14:
Criteria for evaluating suggested strategies

For each issue, identify the specific strategies to be evaluated. Be sure to take the time to discuss and agree on the criteria to be used to evaluate the appropriateness of specific strategies. Do not overdo the number or strictness of the criteria to the point that you are not able to exercise judgement and make wise choices.

	The issue:	The proposed strategy:	The goals the strategy is meant to achieve:	How and when we will measure the success of the strategy once we have implemented the proposed actions:
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Worksheet 15:
Making a detailed implementation plan

For each issue, make a detailed implementation plan by filling out the worksheet below.

Issue	What will be done	Who will do it	When will it be done	How will it be done
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				

Worksheet 16:
Reviewing the strategies and implementation plans

Have a small team from the party conduct an initial review of the draft plan to catch obvious problems. Consider using this group to lead the more formal review process, including communicating the contents of the draft plan and getting stakeholder feedback. Be inclusive in your plan review process.

1. Determine who needs to participate in reviewing and adopting the plan in order to achieve the maximum plan ownership (be inclusive).
2. Review your stakeholder lists and assess who is likely to support or oppose the plan or key plan element, and what their 'issue' is and why.
3. Discuss what can be done to maintain support and to convert opposition to support.
4. Develop and communicate a plan review and adoption process.

Outline a communications and information process to inform stakeholders of the plan, the review process and its adoption (examples: staff meetings, memos, newsletters, meetings, focus groups).

Answer the following questions:
During the implementation process, who needs to be...:

- informed: when and how?
- consulted: when and how?

Make sure the key resources necessary for implementation are identified, and indicate whether or not these are assured. Do not forget personnel, IT and communication resources.

Resource	Assured	
	Yes	No
1.		
2.		
3.		

Worksheet 17:
Evaluating the implemented strategies

Strategy	Strengths	Weaknesses	Degree of goal achievement	Modifications that would improve it	Summary evaluation
					☐ Maintain
					☐ Replace with new or revised element
					☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain
					☐ Replace with new or revised element
					☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain
					☐ Replace with new or revised element
					☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain
					☐ Replace with new or revised element
					☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain
					☐ Replace with new or revised element
					☐ Terminate

Worksheet 18:
Evaluating the strategic planning process

Planning process element	Strengths	Weaknesses	Modifications that would improve it	Summary evaluation	Summary evaluation
					☐ Maintain ☐ Replace with new or revised element ☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain ☐ Replace with new or revised element ☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain ☐ Replace with new or revised element ☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain ☐ Replace with new or revised element ☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain ☐ Replace with new or revised element ☐ Terminate
					☐ Maintain ☐ Replace with new or revised element ☐ Terminate

Annex III

Activities and workload

As an example of the approximate amount of time that should be invested in the strategic planning process, an overview is provided below of the activities in which the consultants were involved, and the work hours spent, in the case of the Georgian political parties in 2010–2011.

Activities

Phase I

1. **A two-day training course for the consultants**, to familiarize them with the methodology and jointly decide on the final design of the process, division of tasks and preliminary time frame.

Phase II

1. **A three-hour training course/briefing** in which the methodology of Phase II was communicated. Confirmation was received from group members regarding their understanding of the steps to be taken and the work it entails.
2. **A three-hour mid-term meeting**. The input for this meeting was a draft document that contains the completed worksheets for Phase II. During the meeting, NIMD staff and the consultants discussed the document with the group, gave feedback and made recommendations for improvement. NIMD and the consultants also clarified any items that were insufficiently clear to the group.
3. **Submission of the draft document on Phase I.**
4. **A two-day retreat**. The input for this meeting was the draft document on Phase I. The process was a joint review of the whole document with the consultants, NIMD and the strategic planning working group. The outputs were a discussion and reflection on the content of the document, and ideas on how to improve the draft.
5. **Submission of document on Phase I.**

Phase III

1. **A three-hour training course/ briefing**, in which the methodology of Phase III was communicated, and confirmation was received from the group that they understood the steps to be taken and the work it entails.
2. **A three-hour mid-term meeting**. The input for this meeting was a draft document that contains the completed worksheets for Phase II. During the meeting, NIMD staff and the consultants discussed the document with the group, gave feedback and made recommendations for improvement. NIMD and the consultants also clarified anything that was insufficiently clear to the group.
3. **Submission of the draft document on Phase II.**
4. **A two-day retreat**. The input for this meeting was the draft document on Phase II. The process was a joint review of the whole document with the consultants, NIMD and the strategic planning working group. The output was a discussion and reflection on the content of the document, and ideas on how to improve the draft.
5. **Submission of document on Phase II.**

Phase IV

1. **Evaluation meeting** with the consultants, parties and NIMD.

Typical workload for the consultants

Phase I:

1. Two days' training (of the consultants) on the methodology (10 hours).

Phase II:

1. Briefing the strategic working groups (5 hours);
2. Mid-term review (5 hours);
3. Retreat (10 hours).

Phase III:

1. Briefing the strategic working groups (5 hours);
2. Mid-term review (5 hours);
3. Retreat (10 hours).

Phase IV:

1. Final evaluation meeting: (5 hours).

Total: 55 hours

These hours were spent in a relatively dispersed way, often spread out over several months. In Georgia, the process took a bit less than one year for most parties, and there were 15 months between the start with the first party and completion with the last party. That does not mean, however, that this amount of time is necessary in every case. Much depends on the intervals between the meetings and retreats. It may be advisable to make those intervals shorter if there is a reason to finish the process in less time. In Georgia, assignments were often only done close to, or even during, the meetings and retreats, making long intervals for preparation or reflection less relevant. In other cases, the intervals had to be made longer for a number of reasons.

Indication of costs

Giving a relatively exact estimate of the costs involved in the planning process is very difficult. Much depends on the level of expenditure in the country in question, the number of political parties taking part, the level of intensity, the length of the process and so on. We do want to indicate, however, that strategic planning can require a serious investment of money, time, and collective and individual effort.

Cost should in all cases be expected in the following areas:

- fees and travel costs for external strategic planning adviser to introduce the concept (if used);
- consultant fees;
- venue hire, accommodation costs and equipment for the retreats;
- travel for the retreats (staff, consultants, working group members);
- potential replacement of staff involved in guiding the process locally; and
- evaluator fees (if used).

Annex IV

Interview guidelines for post-planning meetings

This annex can be used as a guideline for interviews after the planning process has been concluded. It is meant to provide pointers for looking back and identifying successes and areas for improvement in future cycles of strategic planning.

I. General points, impressions, ideas

II. Focus on Phase I: preparation, training the consultants

For consultants:

- What was good/bad about it?
- Level of detail?
- Was the selection of consultants made satisfactorily?
- Did the consultants possess the right competencies?
- What are the necessary competencies and characteristics of consultants?
- Would you rather have generic or party-specific consultants?
- Was the preparation sufficient?
- Did you experience any gaps?
- Were there any unnecessary elements or activities?

For political parties:

- Was the selection of consultants made satisfactorily?
- Did the consultants possess the right competencies?
- What are the necessary competencies and characteristics of consultants?

III. Focus on Phase II: drafting the strategic plan

Did you embrace the idea of participating from the very beginning? Why / why not? If not, what made you change your mind about participating?

[talk through each step: good, bad, difficult, order, internal logic, etc.]

1. getting the mandate, agreement on process;
2. developing a vision for the future;
3. evaluating stakeholders, mission and values;
4. SWOT analysis;
5. identifying and assessing strategic issues;
6. formulating strategies;
7. reviewing and adopting the strategic plan;
8. developing an effective implementation process.

IV. Focus on Phase III: implementing the strategic plan

[talk about the next steps, by which we can get a feeling for the commitment, usefulness, practicability, future challenges and concerns, etc.]

1. carrying out the implementation plan;
2. periodic reviews of environment and strategic issues; and
3. monitoring progress and results.

V. Concluding questions

- Was the overall timing sufficient?
- How was the overall communication with consultants and the assistance provider(s), and with other parties about progress and process?
- Has there been a lasting impact on thinking and acting within your party?
- Is the political landscape uncertain and unpredictable at the moment?
- What will this mean for the implementation plan?
- Did this strategy process affect how your party deals with the current uncertainty?
- Is your party now better equipped? Or will the benefits be diluted because short-term concerns will take over?

Acronyms and abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
APRA	Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana
CSO	civil society organization
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

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Colophon

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Political parties are too often forced to focus on short-term external crises to the detriment of the medium and long-term development of their strategies and the internal organization to support these strategies. This tool helps political parties address this issue by focusing on the importance of strategic planning as a means for strengthening their capacity to engage in organizational learning and respond to changing circumstances.

This publication aims to provide a practical tool to help political parties conduct strategic planning, and offers assistance providers and political parties alike a step-by-step methodology for conducting this planning process.



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