

Annual Report 2020



INDEPENDENT DIPLOMAT

THE DIPLOMATIC ADVISORY GROUP

During 2020, COVID-19 presented significant challenges to the operations of Independent Diplomat. In particular it made it more difficult to implement its work, which had hitherto relied heavily on face-to-face meetings; the pandemic made the challenges of our partners more acute; and the focus of the international community narrowed as it worked almost exclusively to combat the virus, sometimes to the detriment of the conflict resolution processes on which ID works. Nevertheless, ID has succeeded in achieving – with its partners – a range of high impact outcomes. ID is devising new and innovative ways for its partners' voices to be heard, and transforming the international political system in the process.

Refugees

Objectives

- To ensure refugees have the diplomatic and public space to advocate for their interests.
- To ensure refugees have the skills, expertise and institutional capacity to exert an effective and sustained voice in policymaking.

Context

ID has helped to create, evolve and advise a global network of refugees, the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN). The impetus was our observation that refugee policy was missing any input from refugees themselves. The impact of GRN has been significant.

In 2020, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work focused on ensuring that refugees were not left behind with respect to the international response to the pandemic.

Activities and Outputs

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ID supported the GRN's work to ensure refugees are not left behind. The GRN called for international actors to think about how COVID-19 will impact the refugee community and hosted a Global Online Conference on Refugee Leadership in Response to COVID-19, where they convened over 100 refugee leaders and allies from around the world, virtually, to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the refugee community and how other actors can engage.
- ID partnered with Open Society Foundations (OSF), Asylum Access, and others to launch a crowdfunding campaign to secure resources for 10 refugee-led organizations that were responding directly to the pandemic.

Mali

Objective

- The implementation of the Mali Peace Agreement through the provision of professional diplomatic advice and services to the Coordination of Movements of the Azawad (CMA).

Context

The first six months of 2020 were significantly affected by the unilateral decision of the Malian government to hold legislative elections despite the lack of implementation of the administrative and electoral redistricting as foreseen by the Mali Peace Agreement. As the Independent Observer – in its April 2020 report – pointed out,

the conditions under which the legislative elections took place were a blow to the decentralization process and resulted in the under-representation of northern regions. Moreover, the outbreak of COVID-19 shifted the attention away from the Mali Peace Process resulting in further delays in the sessions of the CSA (Peace Agreement implementation). Despite these challenges, ID's work with the CMA resulted in the CMA's continued constructive engagement in the Mali Peace Agreement, remaining one of the most committed actors to the process. The CMA's efforts have yet to be met with concrete progress for its constituency on the ground and the delivery of long-promised institutional and political reforms alongside steps to deliver basic social services in the North.

Activities and Outputs

- ID provided advice around the outbreak of COVID-19 in Mali and the specific effects this had on an already dire humanitarian situation in the North. It enabled the CMA to coordinate its response with UN agencies and Malian government.
- ID provided support to the CMA's follow-up of the Inclusive National Dialogue.
- ID conducted a strategy session with CMA representatives to the formal negotiations on Peace Agreement implementation (CSA) to help prepare for them.
- ID worked with CMA to develop a response to the Panel of Experts mid-term report in April 2020 which had an impact on the final report drafted by the Panel of Experts in August 2020. This helped ensure a more accurate and insightful report that could help better inform decisions of the Security Council and other international actors.
- ID developed together with the CMA an engagement plan for the CMA with the Human Rights Council and human-rights related bodies, which resulted in the first CMA briefing to the UN Missions in Geneva in June 2020.
- ID supported the women of the CMA to strengthen their cooperation with Malian civil society actors including by participating in the People's Coalition recently launched by a group of CSOs from Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Climate Change / Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) / High Ambition Coalition

Objective

- To support the Marshall Islands and the High Ambition Coalition (HAC) in its diplomatic efforts to avoid devastating climate impacts.

Context

ID's climate change work was made significantly more challenging by the emergence of COVID-19 in 2020. The pandemic's travel restrictions posed obstacles to our work, and it was difficult to achieve the same kind of outcomes that we would expect to see through in-person meetings, or to generate the momentum that might be created when everyone can be brought together in the same room. Despite this, ID managed to move to a fully virtual set-up without a significant drop in outputs, and even to support an expansion of the work of the High Ambition Coalition to respond to the urgent issue of a green and resilient recovery from the pandemic.

Activities and Outputs

- ID supported the RMI to convene a ministerial-level meeting of the High Ambition Coalition in June 2020 that set the coalition's direction for the remainder of the year, and identified 3 focus areas: ensuring a resilient COVID recovery that aligns with the Paris Agreement, ensuring NDC delivery this year, and maintaining momentum to the COP26 climate talks, which were rescheduled for 2021.

- The Green Recovery working group met throughout the summer, and in November, leaders in the HAC launched the Statement on Resilient Recovery. This statement set out a raft of policy commitments for signatories to undertake in order to deliver a green recovery, nationally and internationally.

Yemen

Objectives

- Southern Transitional Council (STC): Advise the STC and enhance its diplomatic engagement within the UN-led political process towards a solution for the South Yemen issue;
- Yemeni women: Support South Yemeni women to shape international policymaking on the South issue and broader Yemeni crisis.

Context

The Riyadh Agreement signed on 5 November 2019 remains a key focus of policymaking on the Southern issue, including its link to the UN-led political process in Yemen. Throughout 2020, the Southern Transitional Council and Yemeni Government engaged in talks to advance the implementation of the Agreement. In a July 2020 round of talks, a new power sharing arrangement was agreed which secured ministerial representation for the STC within a new government – a critical step for inclusion of the Southern voice in political efforts to end the Yemeni conflict.

In light of COVID-19, the humanitarian situation became even more of an acute a priority in the South. Alongside ID's advice to support the STC's diplomatic and international engagement, ID intensified its support on the humanitarian and human rights fronts for the STC's various teams on the ground and abroad.

Activities and Outputs

- ID worked with the STC to facilitate its engagement with international partners with the goal of articulating concrete proposals to enable an inclusive political solution.
- ID supported two high-level visits led by the STC's Europe representative to Geneva in the margins of the Human Right Council session in February 2020. This visit was followed shortly by a STC women-led visit to Brussels in March to engage with the EU and European Member States on Yemeni women's political participation.
- ID provided support to Southern women and civil society voices, including by facilitating panel discussions.

Western Sahara (Frente POLISARIO)

Objectives

- To achieve progress towards a negotiated political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with international law;

Context

Despite active efforts by the Frente POLISARIO to kick-start a meaningful peace process for the people of Western Sahara, the political track remained stalled throughout 2020. The UN Secretary-General did not appoint a new Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, effectively leaving the position vacant for over 12 months.

Activities and Outputs

- With international attention to Western Sahara limited, ID worked with the Frente POLISARIO to develop a strategy for activity beyond the stalled UN process, including working with regional allies such as South Africa. In New York, South Africa championed a new 'Friends of Western Sahara' group.

Women's Political Participation in Peacebuilding

Objectives

- Track I peace processes are more inclusive of women, and female political leaders are well-prepared to participate assertively in political negotiations; peace agreements forged are gender sensitive.

Context

ID continued to work with women leaders to ensure greater gender parity in Track I peace processes. For the first time, ID finalized a partnership with UN Women that enabled ID to provide rapid support to women involved in peace negotiations.

ID launched a two-day workshop for the female representatives of the Venezuelan Interim Government (VIG) to build their capacity as Ambassadors, strengthen their confidence in engaging with the media, and bolster their profiles within the VIG as constructive decision-makers. ID also continued to work with female stakeholders in peace processes in Yemen, Myanmar, and Western Sahara to identify entry points into what remain male-dominated peace processes.

Activities and outputs

- Capacity Building Training: ID held a two-day workshop for female Ambassadors of the Venezuelan Interim Government. The workshop provided the opportunity to develop a joint strategy to increase women's representation within the peace process.
- Partnerships: ID launched a new partnership with UN Women which will enable ID to provide rapid support to female negotiators in peace processes.

Rohingya

Objective

- To assist an emerging group of Rohingya representatives to play a greater role in influencing the diplomatic response to the crisis, with a particular focus on accountability.

Context

ID's Rohingya partners maintained a high level of diplomatic activity over the first half of 2020, rapidly adapting to the emergence of COVID-19 to ensure virtual engagement of key international interlocutors.

The first quarter of 2020 saw a significant breakthrough in the pursuit of justice and accountability, with the International Court of Justice releasing a favorable provisional opinion ordering Myanmar to preserve evidence of war crimes and end any future genocidal actions. As the OIC, led by Gambia, spearheaded the case, ID's partners pursued support for the case through the delivery of thematic interventions on issues such as sexual violence.

Activities and Outputs

- In early March, ID supported a visit for our partners from inside Myanmar and the diaspora to London, Brussels, and Paris to push for action on accountability.
- As COVID-19 made further in-person diplomacy impossible, ID moved quickly to ensure Rohingya voices remained at the forefront of policymakers' minds. Given the dire threat posed by COVID-19 to Rohingya refugees and displaced persons in Cox's Bazar and Rakhine State, ID ensured the Rohingya developed and articulated constructive policy positions on an inclusive COVID-19 response, organizing meetings with the EU, UN Security Council, UK and UN Special Envoy.

Meet the Parties (MTP)

Objectives

- Meet the Parties (MTP) initiative contributes to more inclusive decision-making and sustainable outcomes at the UN Security Council (UNSC), Human Rights Council (HRC), and EU.

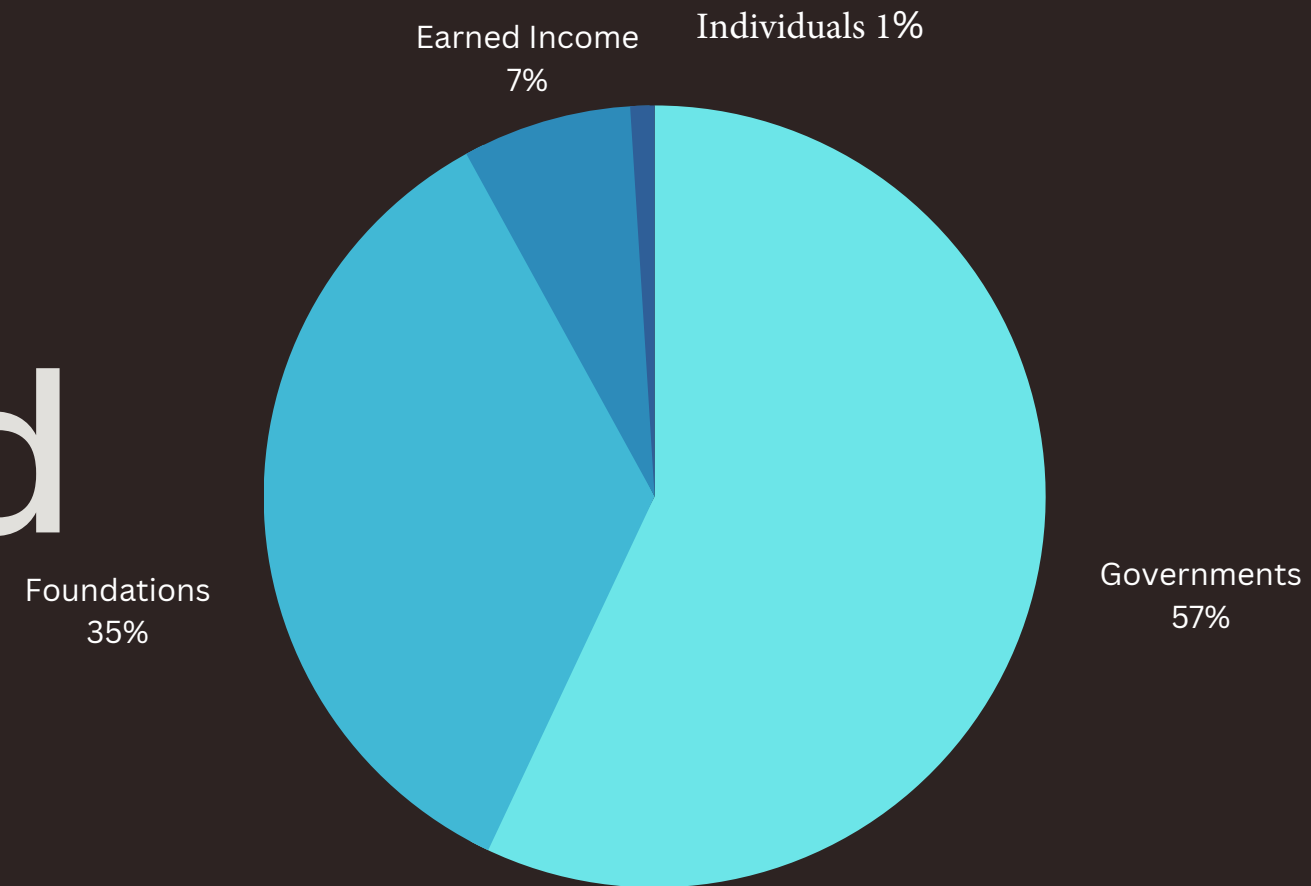
Context

ID's planning for MTP was significantly disrupted by COVID-19. As the UN Security Council and EU Political and Security Committee shifted to virtual operations, all but urgent deliberations were deprioritized. This made it more complicated to secure adequate buy-in from Member States to engage with the MTP initiative as they had done previously. However, ID adapted quickly to modify the concept and accelerate already in-progress work to take forward Virtual MTP (vMTP) meetings while in-person meetings were not feasible.

Activities and Outputs

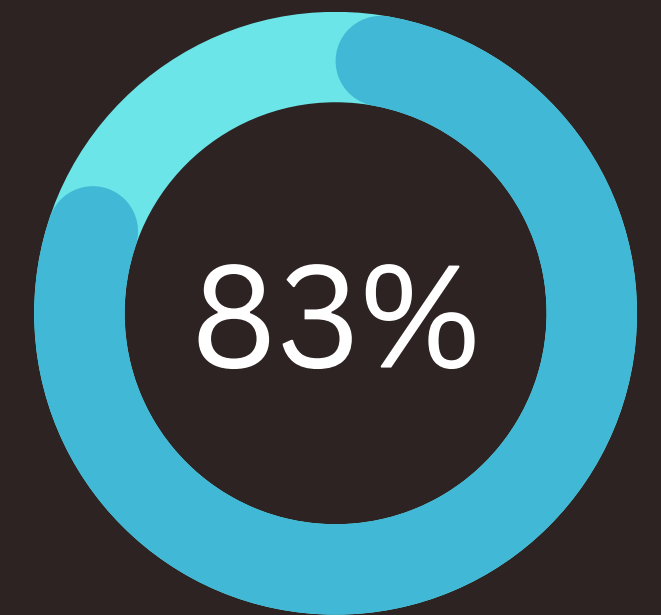
- ID developed a concept for adapting MTP to a virtual platform while COVID-19 restrictions were in place.
- By the end of 2020, ID had restarted MTP meetings in virtual format.

2020 Consolidated Financials



Total Revenue
\$2.477m

Total Expenditure
\$2.471m



Expenditure
to Program
Services

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