



**USAID**  
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# YOUTH CIVIC EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## GLOBAL LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

MARCH 2021

This publication was produced at the request of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was independently prepared by Diana Haber, Masters Candidate at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

On the cover: The Young African Leadership Initiative (YALI) encourages alumni to serve their communities, be a positive influence for transformational change, and advocate for inclusive socio-economic growth. Participants are civically engaged young leaders who serve the public through non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, or volunteerism. Following graduation at the Regional Leadership Centers, 90 percent of alumni reported that they significantly improved their roles in community work and in civic engagement. Firehiwot Tadese (center) says that YALI made her think beyond her community and her country. She is now more motivated and engaged to fight for the inclusion of persons living with disabilities not only in Ethiopia and Africa, but also globally. The YALI model provides promising practices for other regional youth networks.

Credit: USAID/YALI

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS .....	ii
SUMMARY .....	i
THE CIVIC IMPERATIVE .....	2
KEY DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS.....	3
PROMISING PRACTICES FOR FUTURE PROGRAM DESIGN .....	4
Theory of Change .....	6
Civic Education .....	8
Civic and Political Engagement.....	12
THE EVOLVING DIGITAL CIVIC EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT SPACE .....	15
Sample Digital Programs and Program Elements.....	16
Guiding Elements for Meaningful Youth Civic Education and Engagement.....	17
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING.....	18
FURTHER RESEARCH TO EXPLORE .....	19
ANNEX: PROMISING PRACTICES.....	20

## ACRONYMS

FCYO	Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing
Global LEAD	Global Leadership and Education for Advancing Development Initiative
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Education Study
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MT	Momavlis Taoba
PYD	Positive Youth Development
YALI	Young African Leadership Initiative

## SUMMARY

The goal of this report is to support the development of innovative youth programs for the capacity and commitment of young leaders to become partners in building self-reliant communities. It supports USAID's new Global Leadership and Education for Advancing Development Initiative (Global LEAD), which seeks to activate 1 million young change-makers through USAID-funded activities in civic education, engagement, and leadership across sectors.

Recognizing there are contextual civil society differences across regions and within countries, and honoring the diversity of youth, this global overview seeks to understand recent patterns and trends. Clarity of current youth civic education and engagement related activities and patterns will enable USAID to:

1. Understand what youth civic education and engagement programming is happening across USAID and other development spaces;
2. Identify illustrative activities, indicators, and promising practices that increase the effectiveness, scale, and sustainability of youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development;
3. Share how current research on the contribution of youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development applies across the breadth and depth of development outcomes; and
4. Inform future USAID youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development programming with recommendations, and determine where potential innovations and partnerships exist.

### On Leadership Development

This report primarily focuses on civic education and engagement opportunities. Understanding that leadership development is an interconnected ongoing development outcome, civic education and engagement are considered tools for advancing youth's leadership capacities. Additionally, a forthcoming guide on best practices, illustrative models, and lessons learned for supporting youth leadership programs and establishing, scaling, and sustaining a youth network across regional contexts will accompany this report.

### Methodology

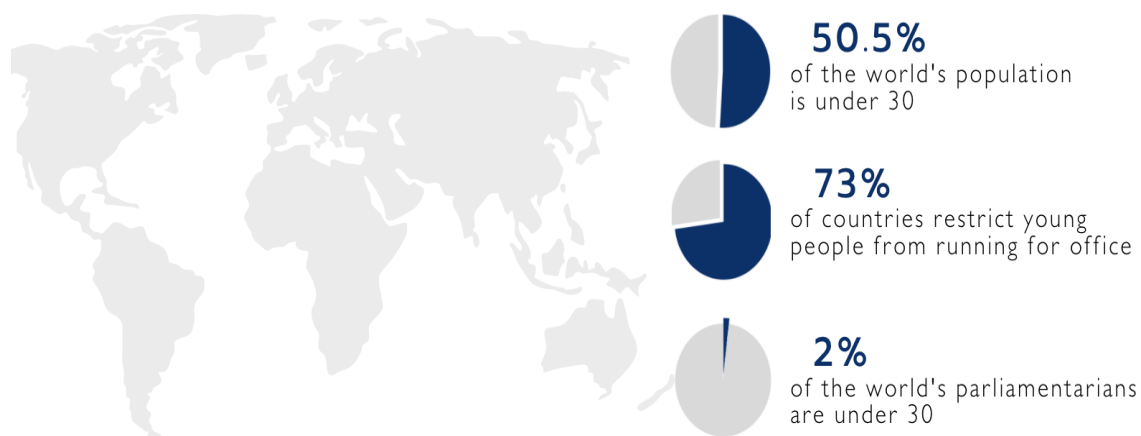
This analysis was primarily based on document reviews and interviews with key informants to bolster the USAID evidence base since the 2002 USAID Democracy, Rights, and Governance publication, [Approaches to Civic Education](#). Careful consideration was given to evidence-based activities and literature with diverse geographic representation. Through an iterative data collection process, a database was created to analyze and code youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development activities.

## THE CIVIC IMPERATIVE

Currently, there are 1.2 billion young people (aged 10-29) worldwide<sup>1</sup>—the largest, most educated cohort ever recorded. Youth today have tremendous access, creative energy, and motivation to connect across diverse spaces. When this underrepresented cohort becomes engaged, the potential for progress in resilience, peace and security, and citizen responsive governance is magnified.

The decisions and consequences that leaders make now will be experienced longest by young people. There is an increasing sense of urgency to engage youth as meaningful stakeholders. Significant frustration can arise when youth are excluded in formal decision-making spaces. If not addressed, these feelings can lead to a loss of trust in democratic governance and can increase in conflict dynamics. Today, 125 million youth live in areas affected by armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> By not effectively engaging youth, development actors leave low-cost potential development outcomes unrealized across the health, education, peace and security, and economic mobility sectors.

FIGURE 1. THE CIVIC IMPERATIVE



SOURCE: [UNITED NATIONS](#)

Early engagement of young people in volunteering, civic action, and voting can lead to a “democratic dividend.” Research shows that engagement in early years can foster higher engagement levels in voting, volunteering, and civic participation throughout the life cycle.<sup>3</sup>

USAID has long recognized that youth are at the forefront of global, social, economic, and political developments. Currently, we see that youth are often the driving forces behind reform movements. They can quickly mobilize to participate in informal political spaces such as protests and advocacy campaigns, but are less engaged in formal political processes due to structural exclusions of them. As a result, young people feel that civic engagement spaces are not accessible to them and, thus, they will inherit an inequitable democracy.

<sup>1</sup> “EduView Dashboard,” UNICEF, accessed May 14, 2020, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/eduview-education-dashboard/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Peter Levine, Ted McConnell, David B. Smith, eds., *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*. (Rep. Philadelphia: Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, 2011), [https://media.carnegie.org/filer\\_public/ab/dd/abdda62e-6e84-47a4-a043-348d2f2085ae/ccny\\_grantee\\_2011\\_guardian.pdf](https://media.carnegie.org/filer_public/ab/dd/abdda62e-6e84-47a4-a043-348d2f2085ae/ccny_grantee_2011_guardian.pdf).

USAID's civic learning and civic opportunities have been critical for promoting civic equality and equity:

- In Afghanistan, the [USAID Promote: Women in Government](#) program enrolled 3,901 female high school and university graduates in three-month internship practicums across 80 government ministries and independent agencies and worked with the Government of Afghanistan to encourage inclusive policy reforms that empower young women working in the government. The program also implemented innovative, nationwide communications and advocacy campaigns to expand the impact of project interventions and promote local stakeholder support for professional women.
- In Kosovo, the [Up to Youth](#) program established a diverse Youth Advisory Board, which engaged more than 2,900 youth in Up to Youth's community outreach activities. Up to Youth mobilized more than 450 youth throughout nine partner municipalities to improve their capacities and skills for contributing to and benefitting from better communities and livelihoods.
- In Guatemala, the [Proyecto Acción Transformadora](#) program is mobilizing 5,000 young leaders across 17 municipalities to participate actively in political spaces. By strengthening youth-led organizations, groups, and networks, the young leaders will positively influence youth policy, inequality, security, migration, and governance in their communities and at the national level.

The progress of our societies, especially as we respond to the global COVID-19 pandemic, is based on each society's capacity to co-create with youth in building and advance a resilient, peaceful, and secure, citizen-responsive future.

## KEY DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

**Civic Education:** Formal and non-formal activities that promote knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviors desired of citizens to increase political participation and civic engagement.<sup>4</sup>

**Civic Engagement/Participation:** Active participation of young people in age-appropriate activities that advance social, civic, and political outcomes.

**Youth Leadership Development:** The process of supporting youth to inspire and mobilize others for a common purpose or to personal and/or social issues and challenges in order to effect positive change.

**Equity and Inclusive Development:** The principle that every person, regardless of identity, is instrumental in the transformation of their own communities, and their inclusion throughout the development process leads to better outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

**Positive Youth Development:** The Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach engages youth along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full

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<sup>4</sup> "Youth Inclusion DRG Toolkit Glossary", YouthPower, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.youthpower.org/youth-inclusion-drg-toolkit-glossary>.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Cotton, *Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations*, (USAID, 2018), 29.

potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

**Soft Skills/Life Skills:** A “broad set of skills, competencies, behaviors, and attitudes that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, and achieve their goals.”<sup>6</sup> When youth and adults develop and cultivate these interconnected sets of positive competencies and skills, communities are better equipped to holistically promote sustainable social outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

**Project-Based and Service Learning:** An “authentic, experiential form of learning centered around the collaborative investigation and resolution of real-world problems,”<sup>8</sup> where learners and teachers are viewed as leaders.<sup>9</sup> (See [Talloires Network for University-based model](#))

**FIGURE 2. CIVIC EDUCATION: ELEMENTS AND EXAMPLES**



SOURCE: YOUTHPOWER

## PROMISING PRACTICES FOR FUTURE PROGRAM DESIGN

### Visualizing the Continuum for Youth Civic Education, Engagement, and Leadership Development

The Youth Engagement Continuum describes both forms and degrees of youth engagement on a developmental path that progresses toward authentic youth empowerment in education, civic, and political participation and decision-making. Figure 3 visualizes power-sharing between adult and youth decision-makers, and is adapted from the [Funders’ Collaborative on Youth Organizing \(FCYO\)](#).

<sup>6</sup> Laura Lippman, Renee Ryberg, Rachel Carney, Kristin Anderson Moore, *Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields*, (Washington, DC: USAID, FHI 360, Child Trends, 2015).

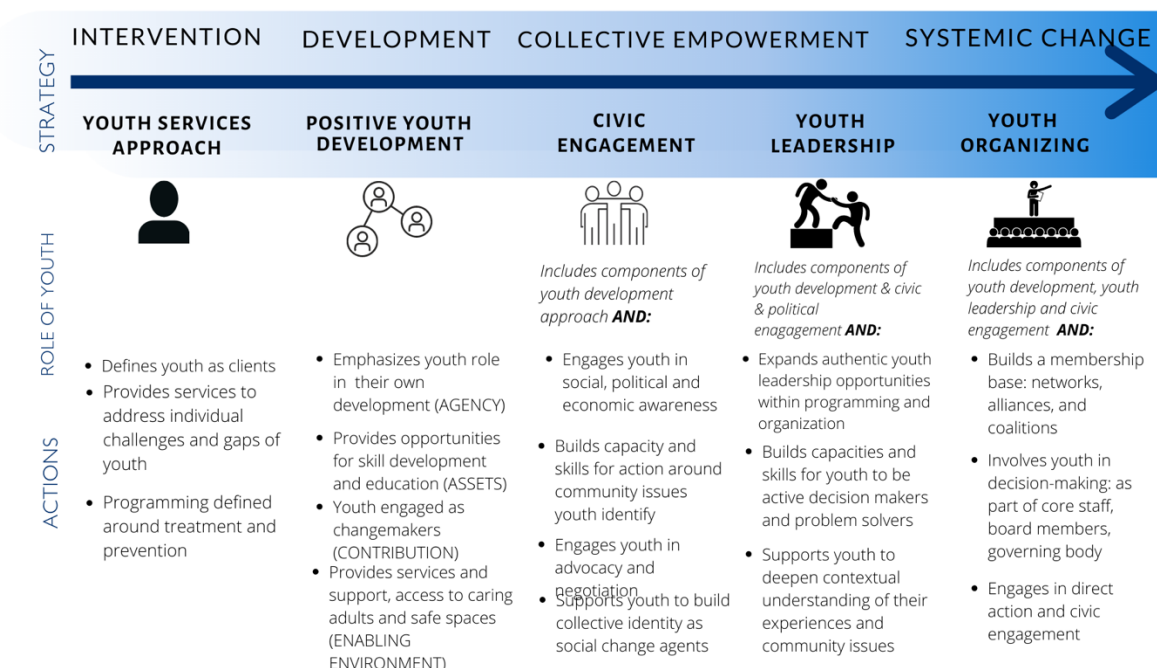
<sup>7</sup> “From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope”, The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development, accessed March 2, 2021, <http://nationathope.org/report-from-the-nation>.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Torp and Sara Sage, *Problems as possibilities: Problem-based learning for K-12 education*, ASCD, 1998. <http://www.ascd.org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/Publications/Books/Overview/Problems-as-Possibilities.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara King and Carmen Smith, “Using Project-Based Learning to Develop Teachers for Leadership,” *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 93, no. 3 (2020): 158-64.



FIGURE 3. POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM FOR YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

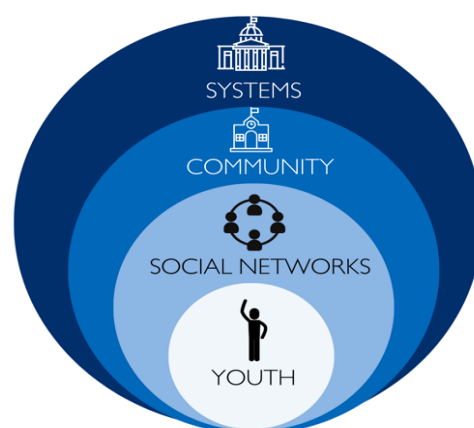


## Influencing Change Across Socio-Ecological Systems

USAID uses the socio-ecological systems model<sup>10</sup> in all PYD programming to provide a framework for understanding the influences on youth knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and how interventions contribute to shaping behavior. Frequent and cumulative exposure to youth civic programming is one of the key elements in ensuring its effectiveness.

When resources and interventions are in place across the systems levels, with a system-wide understanding of their appropriate roles in local dynamics and contexts, young people can be better positioned for meaningful engagement in their communities.

FIGURE 4. SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

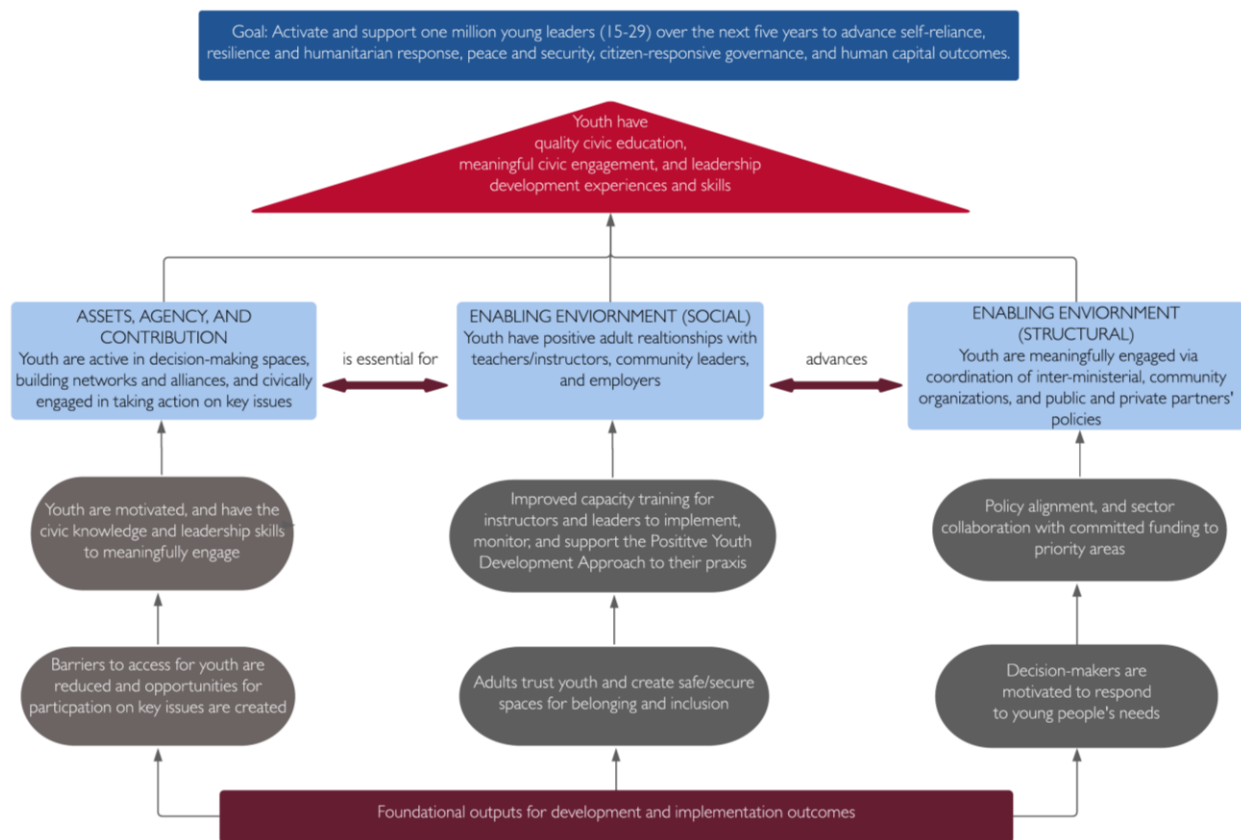


<sup>10</sup> Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecological systems theory", (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1992).

## THEORY OF CHANGE

Grounded in the PYD approach, the sample theory of change below identifies the following connected set of illustrative practices to activate and support young change-makers as part of the USAID Global LEAD initiative. These design components collectively represent the change streams of sample objectives and intermediate results for achieving the intended goal.

FIGURE 5. SAMPLE THEORY OF CHANGE FOR PYD CIVIC EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



### NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The theory of change says:

- **If** youth have access to quality participatory civic education, civic engagement, and leadership training opportunities; and
- **If** youth have positive adult relationships with teachers/instructors, community leaders, and employers who have skills training and support to apply the positive youth development approach to their practice; and
- **If** youth have an enabling environment to meaningfully engage via inter-ministerial coordination, community organizations, public and private partners, and decision-makers efforts;
- **Then** youth assets, agency, and contribution will increase, and communities will improve support for youth-led initiatives for the promotion and adoption of sustainable social outcomes.

This theory of change is based on the following key assumptions:

- Organizational capacity of decision-makers to respond to youth's needs, and USAID can provide technical assistance for priority areas.
- USAID and its partners make intentional efforts for promoting equitable participation for diverse youth engagement, inclusion and belonging, and reducing barriers to access for marginalized youth.
- USAID and its partners have safe access to working with schools, communities, employers, and policy/decision-makers.
- Formal and non-formal education spaces are considered and the quality level remains the same for teachers/instructors, community leaders, and employers.
- Additional contributing factors for ensuring youth's peace and security are being addressed by USAID's current work with young leaders, higher education institutions, and other sectoral partners.

The outlined theory of change seeks to bolster the design, monitoring, and evaluation of programs that adequately address the following barriers:

- Limited context-relevant and conflict-sensitive pedagogy to teach and sustain civic education through participatory learning.
- Limited opportunities for relevant civic engagement in communities; limited linkages to the next progression for activities that reflect youth's interests and support by their social networks.
- Limited opportunities to connect youth-led initiatives and youth engagement from the grassroots level to formal decision-making spaces for programming, policy, and budget priorities.
- Limited access to and knowledge of formal democratic and electoral processes.

## CIVIC EDUCATION

### CURRENT REVIEW OF YOUTH CIVIC EDUCATION

In many contexts, schools remain the central institution that engage youth. Therefore, schools have a role in developing the foundational knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors needed to close the gap between ability and opportunity for civic engagement.<sup>11</sup> Schools also serve as a bridge for connecting across multi-generations and diverse populations, which can help to break down negative stereotypes and foster trust and cohesion. That said, the impact of COVID-19 demonstrates that education can exist beyond the classroom and in blended learning settings.

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A civic education curriculum that enhances critical consciousness is crucial for overcoming inequities by allowing youth to contextualize their lived experiences, “building a sense of agency and motivation to change the systems that have affected them.”

-Generation Citizen

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The quality of facilitation on civic education by instructors is essential. Research shows that when teachers use interactive and participatory teaching methods such as role-playing, debates, mock trials, and simulations, students further develop civic dispositions such as tolerance and the ability to express their opinions on issues.<sup>12</sup>

Many education systems have institutionalized civic education curricula across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. In some cases, civic education is exclusively delivered through non-governmental and civil society organizations, resulting in repetitive participation by the same group of young people. Youth who are not participating do not have either enrollment awareness or access.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, programming can risk perpetuating or exacerbating the inequalities in political participation.

Moreover, conditions of education systems have an influence on interventions. Tensions may exist between curriculum and pedagogical practices of community programming and formal classrooms, which could set back students’ progress and continued exposure in civic education. Programs such as [Youth Democracy Camps](#) work to overcome this by inviting formal educators to observe, network, and learn from the camps’ facilitators.

### DIGITAL CIVIC EDUCATION

The evolving digital realm for civic education to amplify student voice and agency<sup>14</sup> is specifically highlighted later in this report.

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<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Winthrop, “The Need for Civic Education in 21st-Century Schools.” Brookings (blog), June 4, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/the-need-for-civic-education-in-21st-century-schools/>.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Finkel and Howard R. Ernst, “Civic Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Alternative Paths to the Development of Political Knowledge and Democratic Values” *Political Psychology*, Volume 26, Issue 3 (May 2005): 333-364.

<sup>13</sup> Liana Sargsyan, interviewed by Diana Haber and Anna Cron, August 3, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Amy Chapman, Christine Greenhow, Kyle Greenwalt, Douglas Hartman, and Rand Spiro, “Meeting Them Where They Are: The Use of Twitter in Youth Civic Education”, (PQDT-Global, 2019).

## Illustrative Activities for Youth Civic Education Across Socio-Ecological Levels

Analysis of past and current USAID projects identify the following activities for addressing high-level common barriers to civic education, both in formal classroom and community-based spaces.

TABLE 1. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES ACROSS THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

ADDRESSING COMMON BARRIERS THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION	ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES			
	YOUTH	SOCIAL NETWORKS	COMMUNITIES	SYSTEMS
<p>Limited access to and knowledge of formal democratic and electoral processes</p> <p>Low capacity for youth to trust elections as a way to express their concerns, demand change, and hold leaders accountable</p> <p>Weak curriculum and skills in education systems to align for civic participation and employment/labor market expectations<sup>15</sup></p>	<p>Develop knowledge through participatory and gamified learning</p> <p>Support civic beliefs: differing perspectives, free speech, negotiation/ conflict resolution</p> <p>Encourage civic opportunities to exercise competencies to vote, volunteer, debate, and attend public meetings</p>	<p>Peer engagement to practice soft skills<sup>18</sup></p> <p>Family members to connect skill building and civic education activities</p> <p>Educate parents on soft skills for youth and provide parental support to build these skills</p> <p>Encourage adult modeling of soft / life skills</p>	<p>Safe space opportunities for participation (vocational training, sports, arts, debate, youth centers)</p> <p>Integrate soft skills into educational, vocational, extra-curricular, and recreational programs</p> <p>Create community service/ volunteerism learning projects</p> <p>Support professional development of teachers and facilitators</p>	<p>Collaborate with the government department responsible for institutionalizing civic education curriculum</p> <p>Support voter education efforts to reach and activate youth from diverse communities and encourage their participation in elections</p> <p>Increase funding to expand civic education curriculum and encourage extra-curricular activities (with schools, youth centers etc.)</p> <p>Include youth in the research, design, and feedback of civic education curriculum</p>
EXAMPLES	<a href="#">Generation Citizen</a> , <a href="#">The Talloires Network for Service Learning</a> , <a href="#">iCivics</a> , <a href="#">Project Citizen</a>			

TABLE 2. ILLUSTRATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION MODELS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: <a href="#">ANA USHAREK</a>	
<p>PYD Alignment: Assets, Contribution, &amp; Safe Space/ Enabling Environment</p>	<p>The Ana Usharek (I Participate) and Usharek+ programs, both supported by USAID and implemented by the National Democratic Institute, have engaged more than 30,000 youth in constructive dialogues on important public policy issues with decision-makers and members of parliament in roundtable and town hall meetings. Youth visit local organizations to discuss these issues and reform measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semester-long extracurricular program that allows youth to “learn by doing” through debate competitions and implemented more than 50 grassroots advocacy campaigns</li> <li><a href="#">Video</a> on both Ana Usharek and Usharek+ program models available</li> </ul>

<sup>15</sup> “Youth Civic Engagement: Enabling Youth Participation in Political, Social and Economic Life”, UNESCO, last modified June, 2014.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: <a href="#">ANA USHAREK</a>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth, including young women, are seen as leaders and encouraged to take on leadership roles. Youth are given leadership roles as program staff designing training curricula, leading discussion sessions, and other activities</li> </ul>

EXPERT HIGHLIGHT: <a href="#">THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION STUDY</a>	
Research and Assessment Spotlight	<p>The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) investigates the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens. It is directed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilizes a rigorous framework of qualitative and quantitative assessments to identify and monitor students' knowledge, attitudes, and activities related to civic and citizenship education</li> <li>Grounded in core themes in civic and citizenship education such as young people's understanding of civic principles and institutions, their knowledge of how to engage in civil society, and exercise critical judgment, and their understanding and appreciation of the rights and responsibilities</li> <li>Can support monitoring progress for civic education's proof of efficacy</li> </ul>

EXPERT HIGHLIGHT: <a href="#">THE TALLOIRES NETWORK</a>	
Higher Education Spotlight	<p>The Talloires Network is a coalition of 379 universities in 77 countries contributing to the global university civic engagement movement. Designed to raise the standards of civic engagement practice in higher education through the following sample activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student seminars and exchanges</li> <li>Regional and international conferences</li> <li>Faculty and staff development workshops</li> <li>University-community sessions in fostering trust and cohesion</li> <li>Grants to encourage and support innovative practices</li> </ul>

## CIVIC EDUCATION METRICS

USAID prioritizes the following indicators, both standard and custom, for data collection and impact measurement. The USAID-funded YouthPower platform [provides additional illustrative indicators](#).<sup>16</sup>

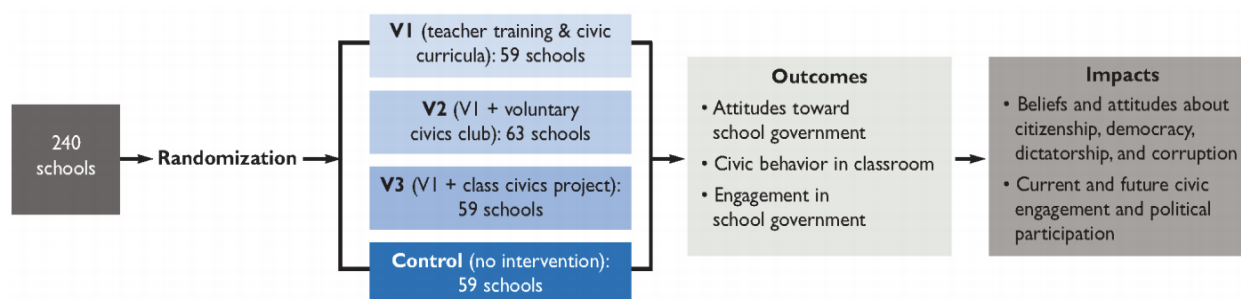
FIGURE 6. CIVIC EDUCATION METRICS

CIVIC EDUCATION METRICS	
Sex and Age Disaggregated by 10-14, 15- 19, 20-24, 25-29	
Sample Standard F Indicators	Sample Illustrative Indicators
Youth-1: Number of youth trained in soft skills/life skills through USG assisted programs	Increased youth report of positive value and/or recognition by adults at the conclusion of training/programming
DR. 2.3.2-12: Number of youth receiving voter and civic education through USG-assisted programs	Increased civic understanding at the conclusion of training/programming
DR. 3.2-4: Number of youth receiving voter education through USG-assisted programs	Number/proportion (%) of youth who completed civic education training
DR.3.1-2: Number of groups trained in conflict meditation/resolution skills or consensus-building techniques with USG assistance	Number/proportion (%) of youth who can identify disinformation
	Number/proportion (%) of youth who can understand the news media industry

## ILLUSTRATIVE IMPACT EVALUATION

Momavlis Taoba Civic Education Initiative by USAID/Georgia is a recent example of utilizing Standard F and illustrative indicators to test civic education outcomes and impacts. The project aims to institutionalize secondary school civic education activities in 240 schools to promote greater youth civic engagement.

FIGURE 7. THE GEORGIA CIVIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE: MOMAVLIS TAOBA (MT) (2014-2019)



<sup>16</sup> Laura Hinson, Heather Marlow, and Cassandra Jessee, “Evidence and Promising Practices from Peer-Based Approaches in Youth Programs”, YouthPower, (Making Cents International, 2020), <https://www.youthpower.org/resources/evidence-and-promising-practices-peer-based-approaches-youth-programs>.

## CIVIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

### CURRENT REVIEW OF YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Globally, there is an increase in the number of and the intensity of youth-led social movements. These demonstrations of non-violent civil action are increasingly motivated by both specific national issues<sup>17</sup> and transnational issues such as environmental, racial justice, and rights-based movements. However, today's civil resistance demonstrations are less likely to result in systems change than those in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>18</sup>

“

*You cannot talk  
about youth  
without youth*

*- Lynrose Jane Genon Youth UN  
Delegate (Philippines)*

”

There is also a shift in the collective organization and solidarity amongst these movements. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa region, multigenerational protests are often now more unified and secular than those in 2010. In Colombia, youth, indigenous groups, and labor unions formed one voice demonstrating against inequality and corruption. In Belarus, pro-democracy demonstrations unified across generations and socioeconomic classes in response to the 2020 presidential elections.

This trend may be a result of:

- Increased access to digital information, leading to a rising awareness of inequities
- Mistrust in elections and elected officials by youth and, in turn, the false perceptions of young people and their capabilities by adults (young women may face a “double discrimination” based on age and gender)
- Structural exclusions and a lack of a clear pathway of citizen participation including requirements of high voting age and candidacy eligibility
- Temporal elements—youth do not tend to see the impacts of slow progress and are advocating for policy change on an accelerated timetable<sup>19</sup>
- Youth-led social movements that are met with resistance from governance can lead to a further divide between the responsibility of individual citizens and the power of the state<sup>20</sup>

Young people are acknowledging that advocacy and civic engagement stretch beyond social demonstrations to influence change. Civic engagement opportunities are critical for youth development to teach essential communication skills so they can articulate their needs and work to generate systemic change through effective channels.<sup>21</sup> Livelihoods are also a primary concern for today's educated youth and are major drivers behind social demonstrations. Participating in civil society can develop necessary skills and competencies for youth to strengthen their networks and discover job opportunities.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Zachary Jason, “Student Activism 2.0”, *Harvard Ed. Magazine*, Fall 2018, <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/ed/18/08/student-activism-20>.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Youngs, Youssef Cherif, Hafsa Halawa, Vijayan Mj, Adams Oloo, Natalia Shapovalova, Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, Marisa Von Bülow, and Özge Zihnioğlu, “Global Civic Activism in Flux,” *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace* (March 2017): 2.

<sup>19</sup> Aryn Baker, “A New Generation of Leaders Inspired By Activist Movements Is Driving Change Around the World” *Time*, 2020, <https://time.com/collection/davos-2020/5764625/global-youth-movement/>.

<sup>20</sup> Carmen Geha and Cindy Horst, “Exporting ‘active citizenship’: foreign support for citizenship education in the Arab world,” *Citizenship Studies*, 23:5, 486-501, DOI: 10.1080/13621025.2019.1604629.

<sup>21</sup> Ani Manukyan, interviewed by Diana Haber and Anna Cron, July 14, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> National Conference on Citizenship, “Civic Health and Unemployment” (2011), <https://ncoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2011UnemploymentCHI.pdf>.



## ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH CIVIC AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT ACROSS SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL LEVELS

Analysis of past and current USAID projects identify the following illustrative activities for addressing high-level common barriers to youth civic and political engagement.

TABLE 3. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES ACROSS THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

ADDRESSING COMMON BARRIERS THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES			
	YOUTH	SOCIAL NETWORKS	COMMUNITIES	SYSTEMS
<p>Lack of economic resources and low capacity for civic influence by civil society organizations and youth-led groups</p> <p>Structural exclusion and sociocultural norms that inhibit meaningful youth civic participation and employment opportunities</p> <p>Lack of employment opportunities for educated youth</p> <p>Limited youth-led decision making</p>	<p>Build skills in social inclusion (e.g., empathy, respect for diversity, communication and cross-cultural skills)</p> <p>Opportunities for youth to practice in independent or shared decision-making</p> <p>Context-specific understanding of youth's needs and norms for participation</p>	<p>Platforms to connect youth change-makers at the local, national and global level</p> <p>Adult to youth professional mentoring and coaching</p> <p>Gender and special populations sensitivity trainings, and separate safe spaces</p> <p>Leverage alumni networks, alliances, and coalition building</p>	<p>Opportunities for inclusive dialogue and coalition-building between youth and adults</p> <p>Community organizations/institutions hire/appoint youth to leadership positions</p> <p>Establish Youth Advisory Boards with defined expectations and roles</p> <p>Bolster volunteerism and internship programs for social cohesion and provide financial incentives</p>	<p>Robust youth-specific policies</p> <p>Campaigns and policies to lower voting age and candidacy eligibility</p> <p>Use of digital platforms for direct engagement between elected officials and youth</p> <p>Establish youth quotas and gender clauses for political representation</p> <p>Collaborate with government leaders to identify young candidates and support them with access to opportunities and resources</p>
EXAMPLES	<p>In Bahrain, a campaign to lower the voting age from 20 to 18 was modeled on a resolution by a mock youth parliament sponsored by NDI and USAID.<sup>25</sup> Other examples include: <a href="#">USAID YouthLead</a>, <a href="#">Youth Invincible</a>   <a href="#">Youth Advisory Boards</a>, <a href="#">United Nations Youth Delegate Programme</a>, <a href="#">Transparency International School on Integrity</a></p>			

TABLE 4. ILLUSTRATIVE CIVIC EDUCATION MODELS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: <u>UP TO YOUTH</u>	
<p>PYD Alignment: assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment</p>	<p>This five-year USAID activity in Kosovo addresses youth social exclusion by mobilizing and engaging youth in meaningful ways to effect change across nine municipalities. Activities support formal actors and networks to foster an enabling environment for youth agency and contribution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established a Youth Advisory Board to represent the diverse voices of youth and provide support across the country for participants in this program.</li> <li>More than 2,900 youth and parents participated in Up to Youth's community activities.</li> <li>133 youth completed the Entrepreneurship and Rapid Market Assessment workshops to assess their municipalities' potential for future private sector engagement opportunities, helping youth to play active roles in the local and national economy.</li> </ul>

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: <u>YOUTHLEAD</u>	
<p>PYD Alignment: assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment</p>	<p>Launched in 2018 under the USAID-funded project YouthPower Learning, YouthLead.org is designed by and for young change-makers making a positive impact in their community through service, activism, advocacy, education, and entrepreneurship. Network members are focused on finding solutions by connecting people, ideas, and resources to tackle critical issues affecting young people at home and around the world.</p> <p>The YouthLead Ambassador program is a six-month professional development and leadership opportunity for young change-makers. Ambassadors play a key role in bringing the benefits of YouthLead to national, regional, and local groups of change-makers, raising visibility and awareness about the YouthLead platform as a resource and networking hub for change-makers.</p> <p>Ambassadors design and implement “project starter kits” and awareness campaigns on critical issues affecting young people; host learning events that contribute to knowledge, skill building, local engagement, and peer-to-peer networking; and contribute their ideas on how to make the platform more relevant to change-makers in their network to the YouthLead team.</p>

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT METRICS

USAID prioritizes the following indicators, both standard and custom, for data collection and impact measurement. The USAID-funded YouthPower platform [provides additional illustrative indicators](#).

FIGURE 8. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT METRICS

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT METRICS	
Sex and Age Disaggregated by 10-14, 15- 19, 20-24, 25-29	
Sample Standard F Indicators	Sample Illustrative Indicators
<p>Youth-5: Number and percentage of young people who participate in civic engagement after completing USAID training activities.</p> <p>DR. 3.3-1, 2.3.3-1: Number of individuals who receive USG-assisted political party training (see reference sheet for important guidance)</p> <p>DR. 3.3-2, 2.3.3-6: Number of USG-assisted political parties implementing initiatives to increase the number of candidates and/or members who are women, youth and from marginalized groups.</p> <p>DR.4.3-1, 2.2.1-7: Number of USG-assisted civil society organizations (CSOs) that participate in legislative proceedings and/or engage in advocacy with national legislature and its committees</p>	<p>Number/proportion (%) of change in youth registered to vote</p> <p>Number/proportion (%) of youth who voted</p> <p>Number/proportion (%) of youth participating in _____ (e.g., political office, political party, governing body etc.)</p> <p>Number/proportion (%) of youth participating in one or more of the following (select all that apply): Advocacy, Mentorship (youth as mentors), Volunteering, Youth-focused clubs</p> <p>Number/proportion (%) of youth with leadership roles in one or more of the following (select all that apply): Advocacy Mentorship (youth as mentors), Volunteering, Youth-focused clubs</p>

## THE EVOLVING DIGITAL CIVIC EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT SPACE

The unprecedented access to information technologies has shifted the balance of power between young citizens and governmental institutions.<sup>23</sup>

As the world becomes increasingly digital, all youth must be equipped with the formal mechanisms and digital literacy skills to access online content for both distance learning initiatives and civic engagement.

Response to the COVID-19 crisis demands the quick adaptation to utilize social media for distance learning modalities, such as Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook Live videos. The far reach of campaigns launched via social media such as the [Together at Home from Global Citizen](#) and the [Black Lives Matter Movement](#) are recent evidence of the ability to quickly advocate and organize, even in remote environments. Research on the use of social media platforms in formal civic education spaces proves<sup>24</sup> that social media allows youth to be both consumers and creators of information, resulting in an increased sense of agency and voice.

However, the use of technology can also expose youth to the intentions and ideologies of corporations and governments. To prevent this risk of online exploitation and harassment, the skills and capacity for online civic education and engagement need to be adopted into formal and informal spaces. Many activities like [Learn to Discern](#) and [Transparency Schools](#) have increased their focus to educate youth on identifying misinformation and peacefully countering hate speech.

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<sup>23</sup> Frank Dejongh, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) September 2019, 64.

<sup>24</sup> Amy Chapman, Christine Greenhow, Kyle Greenwalt, Douglas Hartman, and Rand Spiro, "Meeting Them Where They Are: The Use of Twitter in Youth Civic Education", (PQDT-Global, 2019).

## SAMPLE DIGITAL PROGRAMS AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The following is a sample collection of innovative and promising activities integrating digital components to civic education and engagement.

SAMPLE DIGITAL PROGRAMS				
ACTIVITY	CIVIC EDUCATION	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	ACCOMPANIED LESSON GUIDES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<a href="#">USAID: Learn to Discern</a>	•	•	•	<b>Disinformation Analysis:</b> Highly adaptable across regions and contexts for both formal classroom and informal community spaces
<a href="#">USAID: Civic I.D.E.A</a>	•	•	•	<b>Civic Media Toolkit:</b> Scaffolded learning experience teaching the role of data, media analysis, content creation, and deliberation of civic issues. Adaptable to formal and informal spaces for individual learners or group spaces
<a href="#">World Bank: EVOKE</a>		•	•	<b>Social Innovation:</b> Storytelling, gamified mechanics, and social networks to prepare youth to create solutions that address global key issues through “grand designs”
<a href="#">Cisco: Global Problem Solvers</a>	•		•	<b>Social Entrepreneurship:</b> Animated activities for soft-skill/life-skill development, civic engagement capacity building and the stages of launching a social enterprise
<a href="#">iCivics</a>	•		•	<b>Civic Education Curriculum:</b> Free resource that offers a range of practical, dynamic, and standards-aligned resources tailored to the needs and context of classroom teachers
<a href="#">Generation Global: The Ultimate Dialogue Adventure</a>		•	•	<b>Dialogue Skills Building:</b> Fosters intercultural connections through online global community teaching cultural differences and shared connections to solve global key issues

## GUIDING ELEMENTS FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH CIVIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT



Grounded in the Positive Youth Development Approach, fostering meaningful and effective outcomes for youth civic education and engagement include the following elements:

**Clear Vision for Meaningful Youth Engagement:** The role and purpose of youth engagement are clearly defined and come from a shared belief that youth are active agents and have the rights to participate and be heard.

**Ownership of Program Goals:** Youth must be supported in the development of leadership skills and empowered to have ownership of program goals and activities. Specific opportunities are available for youth to engage in program design and learning, which expand over time. Including parent and community involvement fosters support not only for understanding social, cultural, and economic contexts, but also by supporting “bottom-up” accountability.

**Equitable and Inclusive:** Programming needs to be free from bias or discrimination against sub-groups of youth. Youth’s intersecting identities and cultural norms need to be acknowledged. Resources that ensure quality, safe, and relevant services to give marginalized groups of youth equal chances to participate need to be promoted. Data collection needs to be appropriately disaggregated to inform activity design and analysis.

**Do No Harm:** Adhering to principles of “do no harm” and conflict sensitivity are imperatives to prevent unintended negative consequences and maximize positive results. An effective practice to follow is to identify the target audience and conduct an in-depth conflict analysis for the most significant positive change determined by the target population.

**Investment to Develop Adult Behaviors to Create Space for Youth:** A commitment to meaningful youth engagement must include resources such as time, money, and staff. Since adults are in a position of power, inclusive youth engagement requires changes in adult behavior. Activities that are “ready” to engage meaningfully with youth will have the dedicated capacity to do so. Such initiatives must be prioritized and receive long-term commitment by organizational leadership.

Source: YouthPower2 YouthLead

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

As a global community responding to the effects of COVID-19, we are reminded how interconnected each sector is to one another. Across sectors, the [Youth Engagement Continuum](#) is the recommended framework to support the implementation of sustainable youth programs.

The illustrative activities for civic education and engagement outlined in their respective sections in this report serve as recommendations for future programming. Additional recommendations for advancing youth assets, agency, and contribution include:

1. Design training programs for youth participation in community driven projects.
  - Link volunteerism with social entrepreneurship to enhance youth's relevance, purpose, and networking while working toward stronger social cohesion.
  - Train youth on program administration and financial management for seeking seed grants. Consider micro-grants programs that allow youth organization flexible funding opportunities.
  - Recognize youth as key stakeholders with valuable perspectives who can work with local and national governments to address youth challenges and nurture partnerships with diverse youth across sectors.
  - Examples: YouthPower Learning grant funding, Youth Excel seed-funding to youth-led organizations, youth councils, youth roundtables with policymakers
2. Prioritize and integrate soft skills, life skills, and leadership development.
  - Promote the integration of life skills and leadership development across all activities and programming to advance youth's confidence, agency, and voice to advocate for their issues and engage in civic discourse.
  - Examples: debate clubs, student-government, peer-to-peer training
3. Expand and invest in digital literacy for digital citizenship.
  - Co-create educational approaches and curriculum with youth that encourage digital literacy and foster a digital enabling environment for safe, secure communications, particularly for marginalized youth.
  - Adopt blended learning approaches coupled with experiential learning such as site visits or virtual field trips to foster community building and youth participation.
  - Partner with youth to discern disinformation campaigns, including awareness raising on gendered messages to avoid reinforcing existing stereotypes.
  - Example: "Social media boot camps" (e.g. [New Media School](#))

## FURTHER RESEARCH TO EXPLORE

There is limited existing research focusing on the connections between internal and external efficacy and how youth express themselves when confronted with systemic injustice and oppression. However, research indicates that quality civic education strengthens the belief in citizen-responsive systems of power and the willingness to operate within existing structures to effect change.<sup>25</sup> Further research questions to explore for establishing a critical base for civic education and engagement efficacy include:

### Data Collection Expansion

- How can the field overcome limits of short funding cycles<sup>29</sup> for long-term impact evaluations and learning of cross-sectoral youth programming?
- How can practitioners and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) experts collaborate with youth to design and implement inclusive MEL plans, ensuring lessons learned and promising practices are identified and shared throughout the program cycle for future programs design?
- What are ways to support continuous and systematic data collection on youth civic education, youth political involvement, and the impact of policies on diverse youth groups?

### Longitudinal Studies for Specific Context Understanding

- What other influences shape the civic attitudes and behaviors of youth?
- How do the characteristics and power dynamics at various levels affect outcomes and impact?
- What are youth's biases, and how do they respond to these biases and messaging?

### Inclusion for All Youth and their Intersectional Identities

- What are the promising practices to authentically recruit and retain all youth, giving special attention to those who are most marginalized for inclusion and belonging?
- What mechanisms can be used to ensure equitable access? This is especially relevant for application-based programming, where youth with already extensive social networks may benefit more from civic education than those who do not have the same access.

### Political Engagement (Local Context Specific)

- How can activities elevate youth who are active at the local grassroots level to formal decision-making spaces?
- What are ways that elected youth leaders have success in achieving initiatives and policy change?
- How do high minimum-age requirements for candidacy affect youth and voter turnout?
- What are the promising practices for supporting young candidates in running successful campaigns?

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<sup>25</sup> Nicole Yohalem and Shanetta Martin, "Building the Evidence Base for Youth Engagement: Reflections on Youth and Democracy", *Journal of Community Psychology* 35, no. 6 (2007): 807-10.

## ANNEX: PROMISING PRACTICES

For a growing list of additional resources and program examples, email [helearning@usaid.gov](mailto:helearning@usaid.gov).

The following examples of promising models provide inspiration and information to USAID technical staff and Missions, implementing partners, and other supporters of youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development. These examples were selected using the Positive Youth Development methodology as a framework across the social-ecological levels. The following criteria were used to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of each model:

- **Innovation:** Does the activity disrupt limiting/exclusionary barriers and provide new answers? Can these methods attract today's youth? Are the activities youth-centered, results-oriented, and issue-driven?
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Does the activity make a conscious and ethical effort to foster inclusion across diverse youth to meaningfully participate?
- **Relevance:** How relevant is the project in terms of USAID's approach to youth civic education, engagement, and leadership development?

THE GEORGIA CIVIC INITIATIVE: MOMAVLIS TAoba (MT)	
SCOPE	Formal Civic Education
AREA	Georgia
IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	PH International
TARGET	Secondary-school aged youth
PYD FEATURE	Skill-building; Increased civic knowledge and awareness among targeted youth at the conclusion of training/programming
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	<p>To promote greater civic engagement among young people and to expand and institutionalize secondary school civic education curricula through practical application. Partnered with the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science to expand the reach of civic education activities to 240 schools, improving the quality and scope of school-based civic education as a means to positively influence the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of youth as active participants in Georgia's democratic society. This was accomplished in three variations:</p> <p>(V1): enhanced teacher training and supplementary civics curricula            (V2): V1 + voluntary civic clubs            (V3): V1 + mandatory class service-learning civic projects</p>
RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted professional development opportunities for educators via the Civic Education Teachers' Forum.</li> <li>• MT programming had a significant effect on outcome measures. When compared to the control group, students in MT schools were more likely to express their opinions, learn about social problems, discuss current events, have positive views about participation in school politics, and believe that positive changes can happen in schools when students mobilize.</li> <li>• MT programming had a stronger effect on uptake of experiential learning activities and current civic engagement and practices among girls than among boys.</li> </ul>



DEMOCRACY SUMMER CAMPS	
SCOPE	Civic Engagement and Leadership Development
AREA	Mainly Kyrgyzstan; also implemented in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan
IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	IFES, USAID-supported (countries and funding years vary)
TARGET	14-19, male & female
PYD FEATURE	Skill-building: assets, contribution
ICTS	Media democracy component involved integration of social media (Instagram) in curriculum programming
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	Since 2000, IFES has conducted more than 20 democracy camps across Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. The goal of the 10-day-camps is to build civic engagement among young people, understand all stages of the electoral process, and inspire a belief in their capacity as individuals to improve their country and communities. Training is based on IFES' in-house (both international and local) expertise in interactive teaching pedagogy and regional civic education. Participants conclude their camp experience with developing a community service project they will implement upon their return.
INNOVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project-based learning with facilitators and teachers who have creative backgrounds, including media and information technology</li> <li>• High-performing participants are invited to return to Democracy Camp as alumni staff, supported with leadership development</li> <li>• Democracy Camp National Alumni Network members have planned and executed conferences and outreach campaigns on key issues, including democracy and elections, financial literacy, early marriage, women's rights, and others</li> <li>• Formal teachers are invited to observe Democracy Camps to learn interactive pedagogy</li> </ul>
EQUITY & INCLUSION	Affirmative action measures: Enrollment gender quota of at least 50 percent, representation of rural and urban communities; inclusion and access for students with disabilities; programming intentionally breaks down entrenched stereotypes and stigmas among participants.
RESULTS	<p>IFES conducted pre- and post-tests to measure their impact on participants' knowledge of democratic practices, state concepts, the balance of power, electoral systems, media literacy, and other civic themes. Youth scored 11 percent higher across these competencies as a result of the programming.</p> <p>Alumni are interviewed via telephone to assess changes in behaviors and attitudes six months following their attendance. From the 2018 ex-post alumni evaluation, interest in matters of politics and government increased to 94 percent, with 89 percent of participants stating their knowledge has increased in the area of civic activities. Monitoring student data shows on average more than 60 percent of students successfully implement their community-service projects.</p>
CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political knowledge/comprehension (need early formal civic education)</li> <li>• Formal curriculum and teacher development to compliment programming</li> <li>• Funding (travel budget)</li> </ul>
COVID-19 ADAPTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive virtual six-day Democracy Camps were implemented in Summer 2020</li> <li>• Virtual webinars focusing on mental health, soft-skills, and career coaching</li> </ul>
SOURCE	<p>Interview with <a href="#">USAID</a> Program Management Specialist Office of Democracy and Governance, Nazgul Akisheva, <a href="mailto:nakisheva@usaid.gov">nakisheva@usaid.gov</a></p> <p>Interview with IFES Youth Specialist and program officer Ashley Law, <a href="mailto:alaw@ifes.org">alaw@ifes.org</a></p>

EMPOWERING YOUNG CHANGE-MAKERS	
SCOPE	Connecting youth to formal policymakers and decision-making spaces
AREA	Tunisia & Morocco
IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	Search for Common Ground
TARGET	Youth leaders ages 15-30
PYD FEATURE	Contribution, Capacity, Enabling Environment
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	<p>Established and supported Youth Leaders Councils across Tunisia's 24 governorates to serve as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a platform for dialogue among youth (ages 15-30)</li> <li>• a forum for capacity building</li> <li>• a springboard for community action and local advocacy</li> </ul> <p>These groups provided hundreds of young people with the skills to engage with their elected leaders and advocate for themselves and their communities in a positive manner, creating new spaces for dialogue between different political factions.</p>
RESULTS	<a href="#">Mid-term Evaluation</a> (Morocco) found the youth councils enhanced communication between youth and officials and positively improved perceptions of young people.

LEARN TO DISCERN	
SCOPE	Media Disinformation
IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	IREX - Ukraine, Georgia, Tunisia, Serbia, Jordan, Indonesia
TARGET	Youth (adapted for each age cohort)
PYD FEATURE	Skill-building: assets and agency
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	Formal and informal: Learn to Discern trains young people to detect hate speech and misinformation, and increase their media analytical skills. It enhances critical thinking skills and awareness by young consumers of online information.
RESULTS	Compared to a control group, as a result of training, 13 percent of participants identified disinformation more accurately, 25 percent check multiple new resources regularly, and 28 percent understand the news media industry.
CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	Needs stronger cultural context adaptation, information on young people's biases and how they are developed, and social-emotional awareness in digital spaces.

EVOKE	
SCOPE	Digital Civic Engagement
AREA	Global (100 countries since 2012)
SOURCE	World Bank
TARGET	Secondary-age students and emerging youth leaders (20-25)
PYD FEATURE	Skill-Building, Assets and Agency
DESCRIPTION OF WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Award-winning, multiplayer online educational experience</li> <li>Uses storytelling, game mechanics, and social networks to prepare young people to become social innovators and create solutions that address global “grand challenges” (e.g., displacement, hunger, poverty, water scarcity)</li> </ul>
RESULTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Mid-term Evaluation</a> found the youth councils enhanced communication between youth and officials and positively improved perceptions of young people.</li> <li><a href="#">Working Paper</a> on the “The Social Innovators’ Framework” for developing youth skills to solve complex social issues.</li> </ul>

DIGITAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: <a href="#">CIVIC I.D.E.A</a>	
PYD ALIGNMENT: ASSETS & AGENCY	<p>Civic IDEA is a promising practice USAID-funded media literacy intervention to help build the capacity of youth to be more engaged citizens. Each module in the IDEA framework is anchored by fun interactive digital learning tools and activity guides that can be practiced in both formal and informal settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Investigate:</b> Databasic teaches youth to analyze data sets, correlations, and create visualizations</li> <li><b>Deliberate:</b> @Stake is a mobile role-playing game that enables small groups to deliberate civic issues</li> <li><b>Express:</b> MediaBreaker allows youth to remix visual content in relation to mainstream media narratives</li> <li><b>Advocate:</b> Emerging Citizens encourages civic advocacy through popular social media modalities, such as Twitter, Wikipedia, and memes</li> </ul>