

YOUTH AND DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT

Module I: Civil Society



As part of Ana Usharek discussion sessions, youth put on a play to demonstrate what democracy means to them.

Civil society is a critical forum through which citizens can engage and advocate for their interests in political and other decision-making processes. It is therefore vital that all citizens, including young people, have equal opportunities to participate in civil society. While in many cases civil society organizations (CSOs) are leading the fight for universally recognized human rights, civil society may also be a space in which inequality and other forms of discrimination are reproduced. CSOs that are youth-led or focused on youth and other marginalized identities are often seen by other governance stakeholders as “niche” or minority organizations and face challenges inserting their issues and perspectives into political discourse, even when they advocate on “general” and non-minority issues. While some segments of civil society have provided much-needed leadership opportunities for women and girls, their efforts have also often stalled there, blocked from transferring their leadership skills to other governance processes. CSOs also sometimes perpetuate inequality and other forms of discrimination by failing to be inclusive of youth and other marginalized groups, thereby weakening the democratic culture they seek to strengthen. According to the [PYD Framework](#), youth require a positive enabling environment in order to thrive. This includes positive role models – and civil society is an excellent place to find potential mentors, coaches, and others who can help provide youth with healthy relationships and a sense of belonging.

In the DRG sphere, civil society programs designed to engage youth are often presented as civic education or civic awareness activities to educate young people on their rights and civic responsibilities and encouraging them to vote in elections or otherwise get involved in their communities. Class, ethnicity, gender, region, and political affiliation are all segments within a society, and they all can dramatically impact how and where youth become engaged in civic education, civic engagement/voice initiatives, organizations, and leadership. The same factors that impact adult participation in civil society often impact youth, but not always in the same ways. These youth cohorts should be considered when designing and implementing civic education/engagement programs for youth.

Sample Theory of Change for PYD in Civil Society: Strengthening young people’s knowledge (through civic education), civic skills (through civic engagement and training), and motivation and sense of self-efficacy (providing opportunities for program participants to see the results of their efforts) will result in increased youth civic participation.



INTERMEDIATE RESULTS AND ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

INTERMEDIATE RESULT	PYD FEATURES AND ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES	
CSOs include more young people as leaders within their organizations and management structures	Skill-Building	Build the capacity of CSOs to assess the level of youth participation within their organizations and identify and implement recommendations for improvement. This could be accomplished using the Youth Compass tool , which helps identify opportunities for youth engagement post award.
	Youth Engagement and Contribution	Support organizations in implementing mandates to ensure youth participation in leadership roles, providing youth with meaningful opportunities to participate in decision-making processes within the organization.
	Belonging and Membership	Work with organizations to ensure that recruitment processes do not have implicit biases toward youth.
The level of young women and men's participation in civil society organizations as leaders and activists is increased	Skill-Building	Provide training and technical support to young people in learning and applying practical skills for political participation (organizing, advocacy, political communications, education on government and political processes). Through guided practice, youth develop soft skills including self-efficacy, social skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and others.
	Positive Norms, Expectations, and Perceptions	Social and traditional media campaigns using positive messages regarding youth participation and explaining the importance of youth participation in civil society
	Safe Public Spaces	Provide youth engagement training, awareness-raising, and practical support to civil society leaders and organizations to establish avenues for young women and men from diverse backgrounds to join and advance as leaders in CSOs
	Healthy Relationships	Support the establishment and effective management of internships and mentorship programs for diverse youth to gain experience and build relationships with leaders of civil society organizations
CSOs better engagement of diverse young women and men in the work of CSOs	Skill-Building	Build the capacity of CSOs to institutionalize the use of youth, gender, and other inclusion-based analyses and perspectives in their work so that their programs are accessible and inclusive
	Youth Engagement and Contribution	Support the establishment and management of youth committees to provide feedback and guidance for CSOs in making their work more inclusive of diverse young women and men
Increased engagement of youth and youth-led organizations in public policy advocacy	Belonging and Membership	Support youth-led advocacy campaigns, creating partnerships between youth and advocacy organizations
	Healthy Relationships	Provide structured opportunities, such as forums and roundtables, for young people to build relationships with political decision makers and potential mentors
	Positive Norms, Expectations, and Perceptions	Support public discussions about norms affecting the civic and political participation of youth and other marginalized communities, raising awareness of how these norms adversely affect youth and broader society
	Access to Age-Appropriate and Youth-Friendly Programming; integration among youth, family and service providers	Support youth in monitoring the implementation of youth-friendly programming and advocating for improvements where challenges or weaknesses are identified

ILLUSTRATIVE PYD OR YOUTH-FOCUSED INDICATORS

To effectively measure PYD or youth-focused outcomes, indicators should be selected that are practical to measure and pertain as directly as possible to the PYD feature the program addresses. It is important to disaggregate monitoring data by relevant social segments including sex, geographic location, marital status, marginalized or at-risk populations, and age (e.g., early adolescence (10-14); adolescence (15-19); emerging adulthood (20-24); transition to adulthood (25-29)). As a complement to inclusive indicator development, a [complexity-aware approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning \(MEL\)](#) is likely to be useful for many USAID programs focused on social change in complex environments.

PYD FEATURE	ILLUSTRATIVE INDICATOR
Youth Engagement and Contribution	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 - Other activity Increased effectiveness of youth-led CSOs
Skill-Building	Increased civic knowledge and awareness among targeted youth at the conclusion of training/programming Increased engagement in civic activities among targeted youth at the conclusion of training/programming
Access to Age-Appropriate and Youth-Friendly Programming	Increased number of services/facilities with improved youth-responsive characteristics at the conclusion of training/programming Increase in the youth-responsive characteristics for a single service/facility at the conclusion of training/programming
Skill-Building	(After a civic education training) Percentage of youth voting in a national election for the first time Percentage of youth engaged in civic participation activities outside of traditional voting structures (e.g., volunteerism, rallies, youth debate)

PROGRAM EXAMPLE: ANA USHAREK (JORDAN)

To help better position young people as active citizens and to open Jordan's political processes to their participation, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has partnered with 28 Jordanian universities and the Ministry of Education to implement a two-phased program with university students across the country. The first phase of the program, called "Ana Usharek" ("I participate") is a semester-long extracurricular series of educational discussions on democracy, human rights, and citizenship. Participant evaluation surveys show that Ana Usharek has had a positive effect on individual knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The second phase, Usharek+, worked intensively with a select group of Ana Usharek graduates over an academic year to organize issue-based campaigns, participate in a national debate competition, and hold policy dialogues with political leaders.



Ana Usharek participants in Jordan launch their advocacy campaign with the goal of improving traffic safety.

PYD FEATURE	ANA USHAREK PROGRAM COMPONENT
Skill Building	Ana Usharek combines classroom learning opportunities and “learning by doing”, through discussion sessions, skills training, debate competitions, policy dialogues, and leading advocacy campaigns.
Youth Engagement and Contribution	Youth are included as program staff and given meaningful leadership roles, including designing training curricula, recruiting and liaising with participants, leading discussion sessions, and other activities.
Positive Norms, Expectations and Perceptions	Participating youth are seen as leaders and encouraged to take on leadership roles within their advocacy campaigns and in the program as staff. They are expected to participate in political processes equally with adults. Ana Usharek also developed campaigns for voter registration and to change laws regarding sexual assault.
Safe Public Space	Ana Usharek activities are led by youth, creating a safe space for participating young women and men to express themselves and engage openly. NDI includes young women as coordinators at each university to encourage their participation and sets ground rules to ensure respectful dialogue where all feel comfortable participating. Discussions session curricula include modules on gender equality to inform and encourage participants (young men and women) to engage with each other in a respectful manner.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM SNAPSHOTS



The International Republican Institute (IRI) has a global [Generation Democracy](#) project, launched in 2015, that aims to advance youth leadership in civil society. Generation Democracy offers young leaders a platform to discuss opportunities and strategies for mobilizing their peers so that they can create a shared vision to help advance youth participation in civic and political processes. [Generation Democracy](#) is a global network of young leaders across 70 countries designed to help young changemakers forge national and transnational alliances to build more resilient, inclusive, and transparent democracies.

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USAID YouthPower Learning generates and disseminates knowledge about the implementation and impact of positive youth development (PYD) and cross-sectoral approaches in international development. The project leads research, evaluations, and events designed to build the evidence base related to PYD. Concurrently, YouthPower Learning employs expertise in learning and knowledge sharing to promote engagement and inform the global community about how to successfully help transition young people into productive, healthy adults. YouthPower Learning supports the implementation of the 2012 USAID Youth in Development Policy to improve capacity and enable the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to, and benefit from more stable, democratic, and prosperous communities.

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