

# YOUTH AND DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT

## Module 4: Legislative Strengthening



USAID

In democratic societies, legislative bodies are the primary mechanisms through which public policy is shaped and the economic and social course of a country is charted. The degree to which legislatures<sup>1</sup> function freely and effectively and represent and respond to their diverse constituents is an important measure of democracy. While legislatures may replicate broader social and political inequalities, they can also be critical entry points for youth and other marginalized groups to advance equality and human rights. Taking steps to empower

<sup>1</sup>This toolkit uses the generic term “legislature” to refer to legislatures, parliaments, and congresses, as well as other legislative bodies, to avoid confusion between types of legislative systems

legislators who value the assets and contributions of young people, to increase the election of young legislators, and to ensure that legislatures are youth-sensitive in both their work and as institutions is critical in creating stronger, more inclusive legislative bodies. Legislatures that are inclusive and non-discriminatory, and whose membership, leadership, structure, rules of procedures, and practices are inclusive, are better able to represent their constituents and operate effectively. Supporting such efforts helps to advance the objectives of USAID’s DRG Strategy.



## INTERMEDIATE RESULTS AND ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

INTERMEDIATE RESULT	PYD FEATURES AND ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES	
The legal framework is reformed to facilitate better representation of and responsiveness to young people and other marginalized communities in the legislature.	Skill-Building	Train stakeholders, including civil society organizations (CSOs), political parties, legislators, and other government officials, to analyze laws and policies related to elections and the legislature to identify any barriers to the election and full participation of youth, including those from vulnerable populations. Relevant laws and policies may include constitutional provisions, electoral laws, voter registration laws, and others that establish minimum age or other requirements that restrict the ability of young people to run for elected office.
	Youth Engagement and Contribution	Build the capacity of youth-led civil society groups to advocate for new or revised laws, policies, and programs that promote better representation of young people in the legislature. Such measures may include establishing party list or seat quotas for young people, government funding for young candidates, or special outreach and education programs to equip young people with the confidence and skills to run for elected office
Legislators and legislative staff become more responsive to the needs and interests of youth and other marginalized populations.	Skill-Building	Train CSOs, government representatives, legislators, and legislative staff to identify formal and informal practices in the legislature that contribute to exclusion of young people from legislative processes. Support these actors to develop plans to implement the changes necessary to make parliament more inclusive and responsive to youth, including those from particularly vulnerable communities. This may include changes to the rules of procedure, resource allocation, and/or physical changes to the building of the legislature.
	Youth Engagement and Contribution	Support the creation of mechanisms for soliciting youth input into legislative processes, including constituency outreach offices, legislative open or visitor days, or legislator visits to schools and universities.
Young people's knowledge of and engagement with the legislature are increased	Skill-Building	Collaborate with political parties to conduct leadership and candidate training to prepare diverse young people to run for office. Such programs should include particular measures and tailored approaches to support girls, young women, and youth from traditionally marginalized communities to build the confidence and technical know-how to seek elected office.
	Healthy Relationships	Support legislative internship, mentoring, and exchange programs to provide opportunities for youth to engage with and learn from members of the legislature.
	Positive Norms, Expectations, and Perceptions	Support parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) to analyze the participation of youth and representation of youth interests in the legislature. Assist PMOs and advocacy organizations in disseminating their analysis to the public and raising awareness of the need for more youth-inclusive legislative processes.
	Belonging and Membership	Support efforts to create and/or strengthen the capacity of multi-party caucuses of young legislators focused on the needs and interests of young people. Youth caucuses provide important opportunities for young legislators to build networks, discuss challenges faced by young legislators, and identify opportunities for collaboration on common interests. Launch media programs about legislature targeting youth.

The skills of young members of the legislature are strengthened.	Skill-Building	Provide training and professional development opportunities for young legislators to build skills, including policy analysis, constituent outreach, political communication, and others to improve their work.
	Youth Engagement and Contribution	Facilitate opportunities for young and youth-friendly legislators to collaborate with civil society groups to advance laws and policies that are responsive to the interests of young people, including those from traditionally marginalized communities.
	Belonging and Membership	Provide regional and international exchange opportunities for young male and female legislators and staff to share best practices, lessons learned, and effective strategies to promote inclusive legislation and to advance equality for youth and other marginalized groups.

## 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 represented in _____ (e.g., youth council, municipal, local, Parliament)

## PROGRAM EXAMPLE: FORUM OF YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS (GLOBAL FORUM BASED IN SWITZERLAND)

In 2013, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) established the Forum of Young Parliamentarians to contribute to increasing the participation of young people in parliaments around the world and strengthen the ability of young members of parliament (MPs) to equally participate in the work of their legislatures. The forum, comprised of young MPs from a diverse range of countries (in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America/Caribbean, Europe, and elsewhere), meets twice a year alongside the general IPU assembly to debate issues under consideration in the IPU assembly and provide feedback based on the interests of young people. The forum also holds its own meetings each year to identify priority issues related to youth interests and to increase youth participation politics and legislatures and presents recommendations to the IPU Governing Council. The Forum of Young Parliamentarians has contributed to shifting discourse about youth and legislatures from one of “consulting” youth to increasing representation of young people as equally empowered decision makers.



IPU's commitment to supporting youth participation in politics dates back to 2010. One year later, IPU established the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. <https://bit.ly/2jzGzOx>

PYD FEATURE	PROGRAM COMPONENT
Youth Engagement and Contribution	Representatives of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians participate in policy debates of the general IPU assembly and provides recommendations to ensure that decisions and policies under consideration are sensitive to the needs and interests of young people.
Safe Public Space	The forum provides a safe space for young MPs to discuss common issues and challenges they face without risk of intimidation or threats by older MPs or party leaders.
Belonging and Membership	The forum provides opportunities for young MPs from diverse countries to build networks of mutual support.
Healthy Relationships	Through participation in general IPU meetings, members of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians are able to engage, build relationships with, and learn from more experienced MPs from around the world.

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM SNAPSHOTS

The [Kyrgyzstan Political Processes Program](#) is a four-year program to consolidate the Kyrgyz Republic's democratic path by supporting the development of a multi-party political system with strong national parties, developing the next generation of leaders by equipping youth and women with the skills to actively engage in the political process and improving local government transparency and responsiveness.

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This module is a part of the Youth and Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Toolkit, which can be found at: <https://www.youthpower.org/youth-inclusion-drg-toolkit>.

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 YouthPowerLearning

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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