DRG LEARNING AGENDA OVERVIEW

The DRG Learning Agenda is a set of priority and strategic research questions for which the DRG Center generated evidence and produced recommendations to guide DRG programming. This evidence includes academic research, program evaluations, and multi-method tests of DRG program assumptions and theories of change. The 2016 and 2017 Learning Agendas included 20 Learning Questions across five themes: Participation and Inclusion, Transparency and Accountability, Human Rights, DRG Integration, and Theories of Democratic Change.

The DRG Center formulated the DRG Learning Agendas through a consultative process with internal Theme Teams and USAID field staff. The Center created action plans for each question and a Learning Agenda Advisory Group to oversee annual updates to the agendas. The Center then funded evidence reviews along with research and evaluation activities to fill evidence gaps.

In preparation for the 2021–2023 Learning Agenda, USAID reviewed past research supported by the DRG Center and assessed the degree to which the questions from the latest agendas were addressed (see Learning Overview). This process included a compilation and summary of research including findings, conclusions, and recommendations (see Learning Agenda Rack-Up).

DRG Center Research by Theme

Legend: Evidence Review, Survey, Impact Eval., Performance Eval.

PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION
- Restrictive environments
- Youth participation
- Women's participation
- Social movements
- Electoral systems

Evidence Review: 16, Survey: 7, Impact Eval.: 10, Performance Eval.: 8
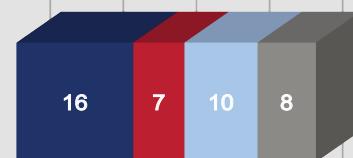
TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY
- External vs. internal accountability
- Decentralization
- Civil service
- E-Governance
- Gender-based violence

Evidence Review: 27, Survey: 2, Impact Eval.: 9, Performance Eval.: 5
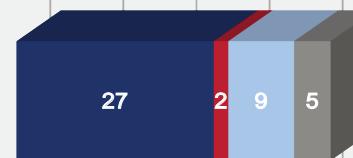
HUMAN RIGHTS
- Information campaigns
- Human rights defenders
- National human rights institutions
- Radicalization
- Cross-group spillover

Evidence Review: 21, Survey: 9, Impact Eval.: 8, Performance Eval.: 11
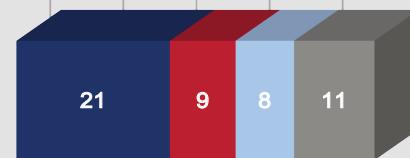
DRG INTEGRATION
- Participation, Inclusion, Transparency, and Accountability (PITA)
- National expansion
- Cross-sectoral expansion
- Scale expansion

Evidence Review: 3

DEMOCRATIC CHANGE
- Theories of democratic backsliding
- Paths away from authoritarianism
- Transitions from conflict

Evidence Review: 4, Survey: 1

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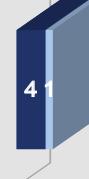
Learning Questions

PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION

- What are the most effective civic engagement/participation strategies for maintaining and creating political space in restrictive environments, including closing spaces and violence-affected societies? What strategies then result in participation becoming habitual?
- What factors influence youth to engage in constructive political participation instead of violence or apathy?
- What are the effects of various kinds of external DRG support on the success of social movements? Under what conditions is such support successful?
- What are the most effective ways to encourage women's civic and political participation in contexts of resistance to gender equality, and what are the risks to women of these strategies?
- How do differences in electoral systems affect conflict dynamics, and how can we use that knowledge to develop more conflict-sensitive elections programming?

Program Areas: Political Competition and Consensus-Building, Rule of Law, Human Rights

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

- How well does external pressure from civil society organizations, media outlets, and citizen participation improve accountability and transparency compared to internal reforms within judicial and political institutions?
- Does the introduction of e-governance (e.g., computerized case management) improve the performance of, and increase public confidence in, public institutions—e.g., the justice system?
- In what ways might decentralization or deconcentration affect (i) the nature of citizen participation in political processes; (ii) citizen support for the national government; (iii) policy outcomes; (iv) electoral accountability; and (v) the quality of service delivery?
- In the context of hiring civil servants and providing positive and negative incentives for their behavior, what kinds of interventions are most effective at reducing the propensity of civil servants to engage in corruption?

Program Areas: Rule of Law, Good Governance, Independent Media and Free Flow of Information

HUMAN RIGHTS

- In what ways are human rights awareness campaigns successful and what are their unintended negative consequences?
- What types of support to human rights defenders and institutions most improve human rights outcomes, and what aspects of political regimes, institutions, and society condition the likelihood of success or failure?
- What are the drivers of radicalization? How do violations of human rights and rule of law lead to radicalization?
- In what contexts does assistance to national human rights institutions lead to improved human rights outcomes? How can the possible risks of such assistance be mitigated?
- To what extent does targeting marginalized groups for DRG assistance have spillover or multiplier effects on DRG outcomes among untargeted groups?
- When a government sets up separate institutions in the justice sector that address gender-based violence (e.g., police units, prosecutors, courts), what are the implications for both the victims' access to justice and the mitigation of harm to victims?

Program Areas: Human Rights

DRG INTEGRATION

- When participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability elements have been implemented in non-DRG programming, how do outcomes in that sector change?
- When citizen participation has led to local reforms in a particular sector, what processes lead to these reforms influencing changes at the regional or national level of that sector?
- How and under what circumstances can citizen engagement in community decision-making, advocacy, and monitoring influence reforms at higher levels of government? And how does this vary across sectors?
- Where there has been collective action to improve local service delivery in one sector, how does that affect collective action to improve delivery in other sectors?

Program Areas: Rule of Law, Good Governance, Political Competition and Consensus-Building, Civil Society, Independent Media and Free Flow of Information, Human Rights

DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

- What factors explain momentary openings and lasting liberalization of authoritarian systems, short of regime change? To what extent do institutional, cultural, geographic, and other conditions shape the paths away from authoritarianism?

Program Areas: Rule of Law, Good Governance, Political Competition and Consensus-Building