



# DRG Annual Learning Forum

Four Sessions:  
March 10, 11, 16, 18

## *Process Track*

Session III: Learning from Learning Agendas: Improving the Art of  
Organizational Learning

Tuesday, March 16, 9:00 - 10:30 am Eastern

A photograph of three young men of African descent. The man in the center is smiling and holding a yellow SunQA device, which is a small, portable device with a keypad and a screen. The other two men are looking at the device with interest. The background is blurred.

- Please keep yourself on mute and **off video**.
- For questions to speakers and panelists, please use the Q/A feature.
- Feel free to write comments in the chat.



## Findings Track

### Session 1:

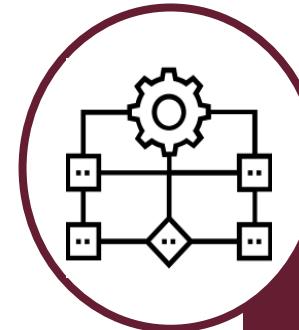
Advancing Civic Spaces and  
Protecting Human Rights -

*March 10, 9:00 - 10:30 am Eastern*

### Session 2:

Achieving Accountability: From  
Social Movement to  
Decentralization

*March 11, 9:00 - 10:30 am Eastern*



## Process Track

### Session 3:

Learning from Learning Agendas:  
Improving the Art of  
Organizational Learning

*March 16, 2020 at 9:00 - 10:30 am  
Eastern*

### Session 4:

Lessons Learned from 27 DRG  
Impact Evaluations

*March 18, 2020 10:00 - 11:30 am  
Eastern*

# DRG Learning Agenda Overview

**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, rooted in five cross-cutting thematic areas. 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 Back-Up](#)).

**DRG Center Research by Theme**

**PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION**

- Restrictive environment
- Youth participation
- Women's participation
- Social movements
- Electoral systems

**TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

- External vs. internal
- Decentralization
- Civil service
- E-Governance
- Gender-based violence

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

- Information campaigns
- Human rights
- National human rights institutions
- Radicalization
- Cross-group communication

**DRG INTEGRATION**

- Participation and Accountability
- National evaluations
- Cross-sector
- Scale expansion

**DRG LEARNING THEME: Human Rights**

The DRG Learning Agenda is a set of priority and strategic research questions for which the DRG Center generated evidence and Rights answered questions related to what makes human rights awareness campaigns successful, in what contexts does assistance and others.

For more information, see the [DRG Learning Agenda Overview](#) and the [Learning Agenda Evidence Back-Up](#).

**DRG Center Learning Agenda Findings**

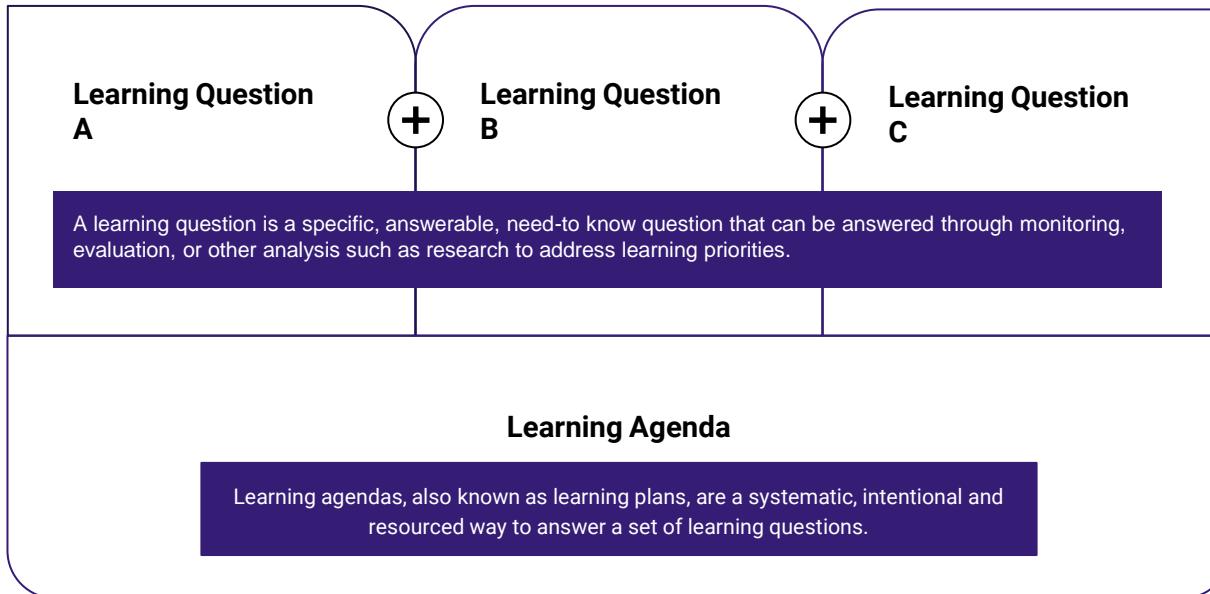
**Information Campaigns**

In what ways are human rights awareness campaigns successful and what are their unintended negative consequences?

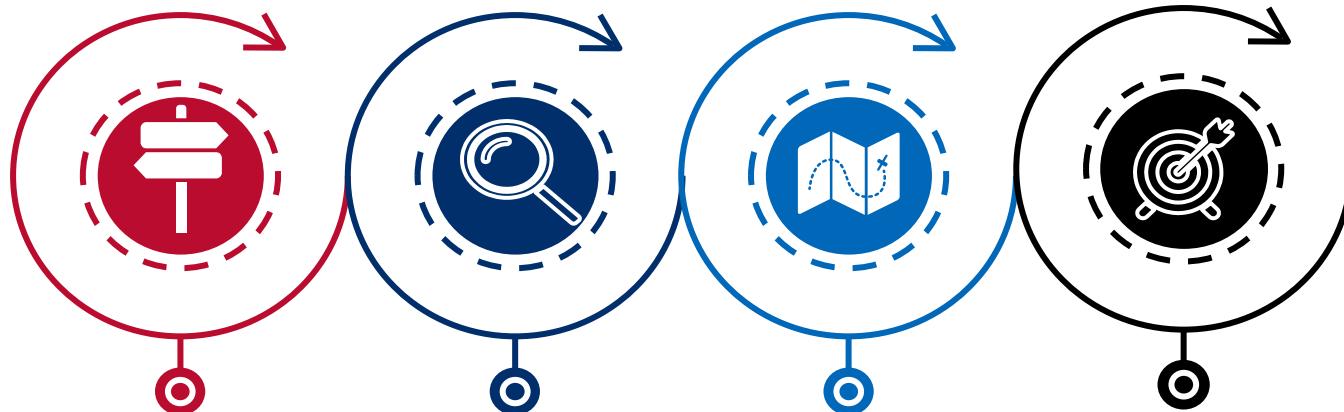
- The success of awareness campaigns tends to depend heavily on specific, targeted, and never-before-disseminated framing for messages, as well as the combination of traditional and new media to disseminate these messages.
- In addition to the benefits that awareness campaigns may achieve through pressure on governments to respect human rights, they may also spark backlash, confusion, and/or frustration.
- In some cases, awareness campaigns may find it more effective to target influential corporations in addition to the broader public, since these entities are often more



# Learning Questions and Agendas



# AGENDA



Welcome /  
Background

Presentation

Panelist  
Perspectives

Plenary  
Discussion

# Session III: Learning from Learning Agendas: Improving the Art of Organizational Learning

## Speakers:

### Presentation 1:

Lynette Friedman, Independent Consultant

## Panellists:

Laura Adams, Freedom House

Catherine Calligan, Social Impact

Nick Higgins, USAID/DDI/DRG



Lynette Friedman,  
Independent Consultant



# DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE LEARNING AGENDA

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Findings from DRG-LER II Tasking N038:  
Learning Agenda Dissemination



## Participation & Inclusion

1. 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?
2. What are the effects of various kinds of external DRG support on the success of social movements? Under

what conditions is such support helpful in achieving these movements' stated goals?

3. How do differences in electoral systems affect conflict dynamics, and how can we use that knowledge to develop more conflict-sensitive elections programming?



## Transparency & Accountability

1. 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?

2. 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?



## Human Rights

1. In what ways are human rights awareness campaigns successful and what are their unintended negative consequences?
2. What are the drivers of radicalization? How do violations of human rights and rule of law lead to radicalization?

3. To what extent does targeting marginalized groups for DRG assistance have spillover or multiplier effects on DRG outcomes among untargeted groups?



## DRG Integration

1. When PITA principles (participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability) are introduced into non-DRG programming, how do outcomes in other sectors change?

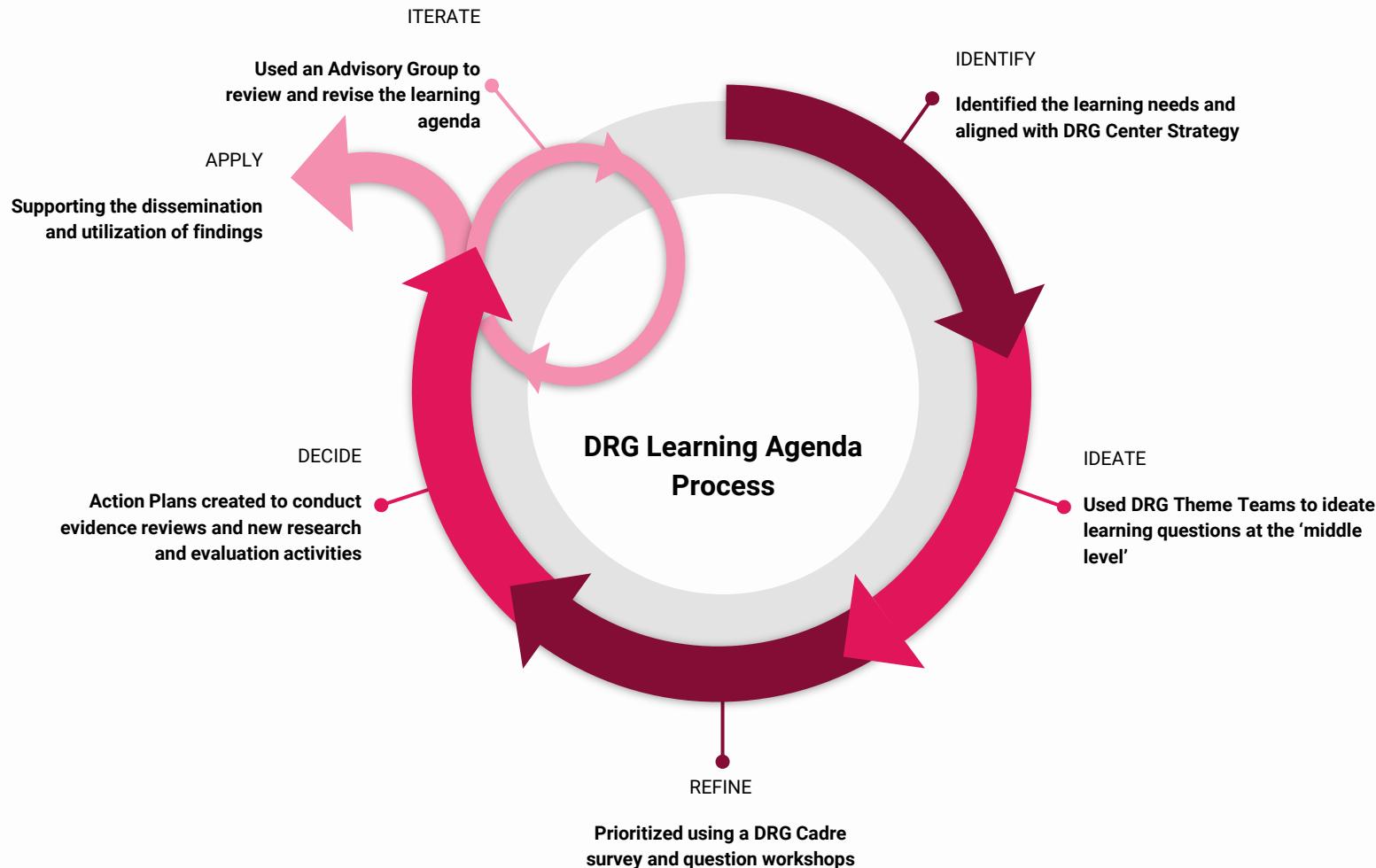
2. How and under what circumstances can citizen engagement in community decision-making, advocacy, and monitoring influence reforms at higher levels of government? And how does this vary across sectors?



## Theories of Democratic Change

1. 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?



# Answering Learning Questions

## Evidence Reviews

1. Commission multidisciplinary literature reviews
2. Hold workshops with academics and DRG team members
3. Package and disseminate learning products

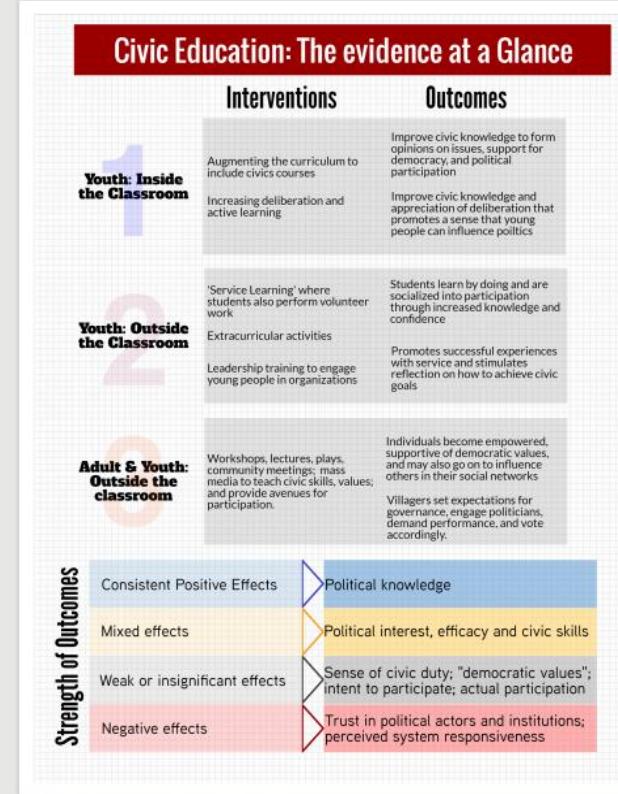
## Other

- Evidence base exists: communicate through learning products
- Incorporate into other Center research or products
- Not addressed due to lack of evidence base, resources, or relevance

“The Learning Agenda brought in an organizing framework. We had a million questions before and all of them were good. The Learning Agenda was a way to present answers in a more digestible format. Through this framework, it was easier to access information when it was needed to inform design.” – key informant

# Disseminating Learning Products

USAID DRG Learning: Examples of What We Know		
DRG Theme	Evidence from the literature:	Evidence from DRG research:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-going, participatory civic education can increase political participation (Finkel 2016)</li> <li>Participation is more likely where citizens feel social pressure to engage (Habyarimana 2009)</li> <li>People engage when they understand and care about issues, and when they have access to government (Verba et al. 1995)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective domestic election observation reduced reported votes for the ruling party and reports of 100% turnout at observed polling stations in Russia (USAID DRG Impact Evaluation, 2013)</li> <li>While social media played important roles in the 2011 Bahrain and Egypt protests, most activists' work occurred offline and was led by formal NGOs using traditional organizational methods (University of California, San Diego, 2016)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Auditing is more effective at reducing corruption than monitoring (Winters 2015)</li> <li>Local governments perform better when aligned with the national government (Rodden &amp; Wibbels 2002)</li> <li>Informal bottom-up pressure can make local government more responsive but is less effective than formal, top-down pressure (Hossain 2010; Tasi 2007)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional leaders trained alongside community members more readily adopt international standards of justice provision and inclusive decision making. Increased social tension is an unintended consequence of the methodology. (USAID DRG Impact Evaluation, Zimbabwe, 2014)</li> <li>Decentralization can improve public goods provision at sub-national levels in low ethnic diversity settings (Dunning 2016)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowered local civic actors are important for the adoption, translation, and enforcement of international human rights norms (Merry 2006; Grugel and Peruzzotti 2012)</li> <li>As standards of accountability used by human rights monitors have become more stringent, violations of physical integrity rights have decreased (Fariss 2014)</li> <li>People are more willing to aid identified individuals than unidentified or statistical victims (Kogut and Ritov 2005)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face-to-face engagement and discussion are effective ways to decrease human trafficking misconceptions and vulnerability in Indonesia (University of Southern California, 2016)</li> <li>Citizens are more supportive of ex-combatant reintegration when provided with context on why the individuals joined the rebels, what injustices they committed, and what level of authority they had within the organization (Georgia State University, 2016)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting score cards and citizen feedback to health care providers improves health outcomes (Sacramone-Lutz and Dionne 2015).</li> <li>Participatory budgeting generates trust and civic competence, and improves service delivery (Tanase 2013)</li> <li>Community engagement can increase the impact of other interventions in a given sector (Mansuri and Rao 2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land rights disputes aided by alternative dispute resolution appear to bring more disputes to resolution and with a higher percentage of satisfied parties than cases resolved in the courts (USAID DRG Impact Evaluation, Liberia, 2014)</li> <li>The peace process in Nepal, which was characterized by fluidity and politicization, benefited from regular monitoring and analysis of the transition (DRG Performance Evaluation, 2014)</li> </ul>



“The workshops with the academic teams were powerful events and effective products in and of themselves. As technical staff, we were involved in conversations with researchers and were then able to understand and incorporate the research at a much deeper level than if we had just read a literature review. A lot of this understanding informed subsequent trainings and technical assistance provided to Missions.” – key informant

# Lessons from the Learning Agenda Process

- Positive cultural change supported learning
- Leadership support was essential
- There is a challenge in ensuring consistency of support over time
- Active staff engagement was a major strength
- The process explicitly provided an important bridge between the worlds of academia and practitioner
- The interdisciplinary approach was essential
- There were too many questions
- The time horizon should expand
- The Learning Division incorporated an effective use of mixed methods

“Having questions is itself a product – when you know what’s ‘top of mind’, you can begin to see how your work speaks to those things even without a dedicated research project. It orients how you make sense of things and it’s exciting to realize that answers do exist.” – key informant

## Recommendations from Key Informants

- Expand stakeholder involvement
- Redesign learning questions and logistics
  - Limit to 3-6
  - Expand to two-year horizon
  - Consider questions at multiple levels



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Arlington, VA 22201

# Session III: Learning from Learning Agendas: Improving the Art of Organizational Learning

## Panellists:

Laura Adams, Freedom House

Catherine Calligan, Social Impact

Nick Higgins, USAID/DDI/DRG

Lynette Friedman, Independent Consultant



## Plenary Discussion and Q+A

We invite you to ask questions that relate to each step in the Learning Agenda process:

- (1) How to Develop Learning Agenda Questions
- (2) How to Conduct the Research
- (3) How to Utilize the Evidence from that Research?

Please drop your questions into the Q+A function

*Please take a moment to fill out survey.*



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

*If you have any questions, please contact Chris Grady  
[cgrady@usaid.gov](mailto:cgrady@usaid.gov)*