DRG LEARNING THEME:
Participation and Inclusion

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 in five cross-cutting thematic areas. DRG Center research on Participation and Inclusion answered learning questions related to the most effective strategies for civic engagement, factors driving youth and women's participation, the impact of DRG support on the success of social movements, and others.

For more information, see the DRG Learning Agenda Overview and Learning Agenda Evidence Rack-Up.

DRG Center Learning Agenda Findings

Restrictive Environments

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?

- While a variety of resistance-oriented strategies have proved effective at loosening restrictive environments, forming domestic alliances is the lowest risk strategy.
- The internet and social media are important civic spaces in many contexts, but they are limited in most restrictive environments, posing unique risks and opportunities.
- Election observation and forensic analysis can provide valuable insights into election quality and, when actively disseminated, can lead to ground-level civic action.

Key Documents: "Maintaining Civic Space in Backsliding Regimes"

Youth Participation

What factors influence youth to become involved in constructive political participation instead of violence or apathy?

- Youth civic engagement programs can exert substantial effects on the perceptions and beliefs of young citizens vis-à-vis democratic participation.
- Political information on its own is typically insufficient to spark youth or other citizens' participation; instead, interventions may require more concrete and actionable messaging to produce meaningful effects.
- Pre-existing informal networks can serve as effective platforms for civic and political discussion and mobilization.

Key Documents: "Cambodia Advanced Democracy Seminar"; "Georgia Civic Education Initiative"

Women's Participation

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?

- Most women's engagement initiatives should include risk assessments given resistance to women's participation is widespread and possibly harmful. Normally, assessments should be attuned to relatively subtle forms of backlash, although some areas have high resistance.
- The effects of participation programs tend to vary by gender, but whether effects are stronger for women relative to men depends on the nature of the intervention, the social context, and the specific outcome (e.g., voting behavior).
- Programs that support women in running for office can yield substantial influence on the political perceptions and behaviors of both leaders and citizens.
- The mere presence of women within the government does not guarantee equity in participation or representation. Constraints to women's participation tend to involve systemic issues deeply rooted within institutions and political practices.

Key Documents: "Increasing the Civic and Political Participation of Women"; "Strengthening Women's Civic and Political Participation"; "Women in Power Project"

Social Movements

What are the effects of various kinds of external DRG support on the success of social movements?

Under what conditions is such support successful?

- Social movements figure prominently in civic efforts for accountability, good governance, and democracy, but they tend to be relatively spontaneous and decentralized, and thus complex for donor engagement.
- While external assistance to movements can provide critical resources and, in some contexts, legitimacy, it can also erode legitimacy or alter movement agendas.
- In the age of dense global trade and production networks, transnational links are critical for labor organizations aiming to improve wages and working standards.
- Transnational corporations are promising targets for social movements, since under some circumstances they may be easier or safer to target than government and can exert strong pressure using financial incentives.

Key Documents: "Donor Assistance in the Transparency and Accountability Movement"; "Struggles from Below"

Electoral Systems

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

- In contrast to presidential systems, parliamentary systems tend more toward stability in post-authoritarian or post-conflict settings because they involve a larger scope for power-sharing and compromise.

Key Documents: "Theories of Democratic Change Phase III: Transitions from Conflict"

Legend

Learning questions addressed by DRG research

Learning questions partially addressed by DRG research

Learning questions not yet addressed by DRG research

DRG Center Research by Category

	All	Evidence Review	Survey	Impact Eval.	Performance Eval.
PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION	**41**	**16**	**7**	**10**	**8**
Restrictive environments	9	4	1	2	2
Youth participation	17	3	4	5	5
Women's participation	21	4	5	6	6
Social movements	11	9	2	0	0
Electoral systems	3	3	0	0	0