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Working Paper

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WIDER Working Paper, No. 2013/064

Provided in Cooperation with:

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Suggested Citation: Finkel, Steven E. (2013) : The impact of adult civic education programmes in developing democracies, WIDER Working Paper, No. 2013/064, ISBN 978-92-9230-641-0, The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), Helsinki

This Version is available at:

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WIDER Working Paper No. 2013/064

The impact of adult civic education programmes in developing democracies

Steven E. Finkel*

June 2013

Abstract

Can democracy be taught? Are individuals more likely to embrace democratic values, to learn basic knowledge about political processes, and to engage the political process more effectively as a result of their exposure to donor-sponsored civic education programmes in emerging democracies? After more than a decade of evaluations of civic education programmes, it is a good time to take stock of what we have learned about the impacts of these efforts to strengthen democratic political culture in developing democracies. In this paper, I describe four USAID-sponsored evaluations that have been conducted since the late 1990s, and summarize their most important findings and lessons learned. It will be shown that civic education programmes can have meaningful and relatively long-lasting effects in terms of increasing political information, feelings of empowerment, and mobilizing individuals to engage in political participation, but that they are much less likely to affect more ‘deep-seated’ democratic values such as political tolerance, support, and trust. .../

Keywords: civic education, democracy assistance, developing democracies, foreign aid, impact evaluations

JEL classification: F35, N40

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This study has been prepared within the UNU-WIDER project ‘ReCom—Research and Communication on Foreign Aid’, directed by Tony Addison and Finn Tarp.

UNU-WIDER gratefully acknowledges specific programme contributions from the governments of Denmark (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida) and Sweden (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency—Sida) for ReCom. UNU-WIDER also gratefully acknowledges core financial support to its work programme from the governments of Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

ISSN 1798-7237

ISBN 978-92-9230-641-0



Moreover, the size of these effects depends critically on how the programmes are designed, the kinds of pedagogical methods employed and the quality of the facilitators or trainers, with much evidence suggesting that the *potential* for larger-scale changes in democratic orientations through civic education is not being realized in practice. I conclude with a discussion of current developments in the field, as a significant amount of recent new work has emerged.

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Typescript prepared by Janis Vehmaan-Kreula at UNU-WIDER.

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1 Introduction

Civic education programmes, or activities designed to promote political knowledge, engagement, and support for democratic norms and values among ordinary citizens, have become a mainstay of international donors' democracy assistance efforts around the world. With the overarching goal of 'strengthening democratic political culture' (e.g., USAID Democracy Strategic Framework 1998), donors from a majority of OECD countries as well as multilateral organizations such as UNDP and the World Bank have devoted considerable resources to these programmes in order to foster democratic attitudes, values, and behaviours among ordinary individuals in emerging democracies. Such programmes include voter education programmes, programmes that provide instruction about the social and political rights of women, neighbourhood problem-solving programmes that bring individuals in contact with local authorities and promote local collective action, programmes combatting election violence and vote-buying, and programmes promoting tolerance and the peaceful resolution of political disputes in post-conflict settings.¹

Civic education had been employed as a tool in post-authoritarian democratic transitions at least since the aftermath of the Second World War, when the (now-labelled) *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Political Education) and activities of the various West German party *Stiftungen* provided education to the mass public about democratic principles in the hopes of preventing the re-establishment of a totalitarian regime (Georgi et al. 2003; Federal Agency for Political Education 2012). But the prevalence and importance of the programmes for the international donor community has surged dramatically following the stunning series of 'third wave' democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia in the late 1980s and 1990s. Even as democratic transitions made way for democratic consolidations, donors such as USAID defended civic education as an important priority of democracy assistance, akin to nation-building and institution-strengthening (Wharton 1993).

Some of the first democracy assistance programmes sponsored by USAID and other donors were designed to facilitate 'free and fair' elections in post-transition settings; these programmes typically involved both the training of election monitors as well as providing voters with guidance on registration and related election procedures and basic information about the parties, candidates, and issues in a given contest (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991). In many instances, the NGOs originally employed to train and to serve as election monitors then expanded the scope of their activities to encompass more general civic education activities (Diamond 1999; Shaiko 2000). Donors, with much support from academic research (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993; Diamond 1999), became increasingly convinced that successful democratic consolidations required a strong and independent civil society, one that could mobilize an informed and pro-democratic citizenry to advocate on behalf of its interests and to participate in the political process in order to hold elites accountable. Civic education programmes further all of these goals, providing explicit instruction to ordinary citizens about democratic institutions, values, and procedures, as well as complementing and extending the other mobilization and advocacy efforts in which civil society groups are engaged (Finkel 2002). Finally, initial evidence from mass opinion surveys in the third wave democracies

¹ Some civic education programmes involve the adoption of new curricular materials related to democracy for high school or secondary school children, or pedagogical innovations for civics-related public school instruction. I focus here on civic education programmes targeting adults in developing democratic contexts.

often showed appallingly low levels of social and political participation, intolerance toward opposing political and ethnic groups, widespread political ignorance, and alienation from institutions and processes (e.g. Gibson et al. 1992; Bratton 1998; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998); these findings provided further rationale for using civic education as a means of ‘jump-starting’ democratic political culture in transition societies.

For all of these reasons, civic education programmes have proliferated as a means of democracy promotion over the past three decades. It is difficult to estimate the precise number of these programmes over the years, but USAID data suggest that the USA alone spent between thirty and fifty million US\$ a year on civic education between 1990 and 2005, a figure representing between one-quarter and one-half of all civil society expenditures during the same time period (Azpuru et al. 2008).² The total amount spent on civic education worldwide is certainly greater than these figures, given the large number of international donors involved in democracy assistance activities.³ Many of these programmes consist of individual NGOs providing information to voters related to national or local elections, while an increasing number of civic education initiatives involve larger-scale co-operative efforts between different NGO consortia, and also encompass issues such as constitutional reform, political decentralization, alternative dispute resolution, and the rights of women, minorities, and other marginalized groups.

Do these programmes work? Are individuals in emerging democracies more likely to embrace democratic values, to learn basic knowledge about political processes, and to engage in the political process more effectively as a result of their exposure to civic education programmes? As adult civic education programmes have proliferated in emerging democracies, so too have efforts to evaluate these programmes’ effectiveness. Civic education impact evaluations began in the late 1990s with a study assessing the impact of nine USAID-sponsored programmes relating to voter education, local level community problem solving, political engagement, and rights awareness in the Dominican Republic, Poland and South Africa (Sabatini, Bevis and Finkel 1998; Finkel and Stumbras 2000; Finkel 2002; Finkel 2003a). Along with a similar project in Zambia (Bratton et al. 1999), these studies were the first to move evaluation of civic education beyond implementation and management issues—such as the numbers of people trained and whether the programmes achieved their stated organizational goals (e.g., Brilliant 2000)—and assess instead whether the programmes had knowledge-related, attitudinal, or behavioural impacts on the individuals who took part in the programmes’ activities. Over the past decade, USAID-sponsored studies

² These figures were obtained from official USAID activity data, available at <http://www.pitt.edu/~politics/democracy/democracy.html> as part of the project ‘Deepening our Understanding of the Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building, 1990–2004’, principal investigators Steven E. Finkel, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, Mitchell A. Seligson, and C. Neal Tate. The data show that expenditures in the category ‘Civic Education, Civil Society and Leadership Training’, which includes all civil society activities funded by USAID aside from activities related to labour unions and the support of independent mass media, totalled more than two billionUS\$ between 1990 and 2005.

³ A search conducted in connection with this essay indicated at least some civic education programmes had been sponsored by the international development agencies of Australia (AUSAID), Austria (Austria Development Corporation), Canada (CIDA), Denmark (DANIDA), the European Commission (Europe Aid), Germany’s Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) as well as their five political-party based *Stiftungen* (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Hans Seidel Stiftung, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung), Netherlands (Netherlands Development Corporation), New Zealand (NZAID), Norway (NORAD), Sweden (SIDA), Switzerland (SDC), United Kingdom (DFID), the United States (USAID), and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) through its core grantees National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), the United Nations (UNDP, UNHCR), the InterAmerican Development Bank, and the World Bank. This list is almost certainly non-exhaustive.

using more advanced evaluation methodologies were conducted in three additional settings: an evaluation of the *Kenya National Civic Education Programme* (NCEP I) from 2001-02, a programme consisting of some 50,000 civic education activities nationwide related to constitutional reform, rights awareness, and support for democratic values and the rule of law in the run-up to the 2002 national elections (Finkel 2003b; Finkel and Smith 2011); an evaluation of the similar Kenya NCEP II ('Uraia') programme conducted in the run-up to the disputed 2007 election that triggered massive ethnic violence in its wake (Finkel and Horowitz 2009; Finkel, Horowitz, and Rojo-Mendoza 2012); and an evaluation of the 2010-11 Voter Impact through Civic Education (VOICE) programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which focused on informing the public about the country's planned political decentralization process and related issues of democratic development (Finkel 2012; Finkel and Rojo Mendoza 2012).⁴

Given that we are now more than a decade into this research programme, it is a good time to take stock of what we have learned about the impact of adult civic education efforts in developing democracies, and to highlight some new directions in the field. In this paper, I describe the four studies that have been conducted since the late 1990s, and summarize their most important findings and lessons learned. It will be shown that there is strong evidence that civic education programmes can have meaningful and relatively long-lasting effects in terms of increasing political information, feelings of empowerment, and mobilizing individuals to engage in political participation, but they are much less likely to affect more 'deep-seated' democratic values such as political tolerance, support, and trust. Moreover, the size of these effects depends critically on how the programmes are designed, the kinds of pedagogical methods employed and the quality of the facilitators or trainers, with much evidence suggesting that the *potential* for larger-scale changes in democratic orientations through civic education is not being realized in practice. I conclude with a discussion of current developments in the field, as a significant amount of recent new work has emerged.

2 USAID-sponsored civic education evaluations: 1997-2012

The four evaluations each examined the effects of exposure to civic education programmes on a wide range of skills, dispositions, and values previously identified by political scientists as crucial to the development of democratic political culture (e.g. Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1990). One set of orientations encompassed what may be termed the individual's degree of *civic competence*, or the extent to which the individual has the information, knowledge and personal capabilities to influence the political process. Another set of orientations encompassed the individual's adherence to a set of *democratic values and norms*, that is, the belief in democratic principles such as competitive elections with majority rule, political equality, inclusive political participation, civic liberties, the protection of the rights of minorities, peaceful resolution of political conflict, and the willingness to apply these principles in practice. A third set of outcomes concerned *active participation* in the democratic process, through voting and campaign-related activities, community problem-solving, contacting politicians, and participation in non-violent demonstrations or other forms of collective action. Professional survey companies in each country administered

⁴ USAID has been at the forefront of evaluation efforts in the field, but it should be noted that many of its evaluations, including several of those described here, were co-operative efforts whereby USAID funds were used to evaluate programmes funded by other donors. Moreover, the World Bank, IDB, UNDP, and other donors have also funded recent impact evaluations of democracy assistance programmes, including several of the civic education programmes described in the concluding section of this paper.

questionnaires measuring each of these orientations to a sample of individuals who were trained in the given civic education programme, and their responses were compared to those of individuals who were not exposed to the training, with the precise nature of the samples and the statistical comparisons being dependent on a variety of specific design characteristics to be discussed below. Table 1 provides information about the programmes examined in each of the evaluations.

Table 1: Summary of programmes and evaluations

Name of programme	Programme content	Evaluation methodology
Three Country Study (1997-99): Dominican Republic: Participacion Ciudadana, Grupo Accion por la Democracia, Asociacion Dominicana para el Desarrollo de la Mujer, Radio Santa Maria Poland: Foundation for Support of Local Democracy, DIALOG Project, Lublin Neighbourhood Revitalization Programme South Africa: National Institute for Public Interest Law and Research, Community Law Centre-Durban, and Lawyers for Human Rights	Variety of programmes relating to voter education, local level community problem solving, political engagement, rights awareness, and women's rights	Post-treatment cross-sectional surveys with 4,449 total respondents. Treated respondents compared with 'matched' untreated-respondents
Kenya National Civic Education Programme (NCEP I) (2001-03)	Over 50,000 discrete workshops, dramas, and other events conducted by 75 Kenyan NGOs relating to constitutional awareness, civic skills, democratic values, and engagement in connection with the Constitutional Review Process and the 2002 nation elections	Longitudinal study measuring pre- and post-treatment responses of NCEP I workshop participants and 'matched' non-participants. 3,600 total respondents
Kenya National Civic Education Programme (NCEP II-Uraia) (2007-08)	Follow-up programme to NCEP I. 79,000 workshops, dramas, and other events conducted by 43 Kenyan NGO relating to democracy, conflict resolution, inter-ethnic relations, human rights, governance, constitutionalism, and nation-building in the run-up to the 2007 national elections	Post-treatment cross-sectional survey. 3,600 total respondents; treated respondents compared with 'matched' untreated respondents, at least one year after programme exposure and intervening political violence
Voter Opinion and Involvement through Civic Education Programme (VOICE) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2011-12)	'Boîtes à Images' community civic education sessions using images to inform individuals about the ongoing political decentralization process and to stimulate discussion about broader issues of democratic development	Longitudinal and experimental study measuring pre- and post-treatment responses of 1,120 respondents in eight treatment villages and 480 respondents in eight control villages. Within treatment villages, respondents randomly assigned for 'encouragement' to attend upcoming civic education workshop

Source: author's compilation.

2.1 The Three Country Study, 1997-99

The first impact evaluation took place in the late 1990s, when USAID's Center for Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Global Programmes commissioned a study to examine the impact of civic education programmes in two countries, the Dominican Republic and Poland, with a follow-on study commissioned a year later in South Africa. Two to four civic education programmes in each country were selected for evaluation. The study proceeded by obtaining lists of programme participants from each implementing NGO and

administering survey questionnaires containing measures of democratic participation, knowledge, and support for democracy to a representative sample of individuals trained in each programme, as well as to demographically similar individuals in the same countries who had not been trained.⁵ A total of 4,449 interviews were conducted altogether: 2,028 in the Dominican Republic, 1,481 in Poland, and 940 in South Africa.

Estimating the impact of the civic education ‘treatment’ in these studies, as in much observational research, was hampered by the fact that exposure to the programmes was entirely voluntary, i.e., self-selected. Participants in the programmes were likely to differ from non-participants on a host of socio-economic, demographic, and political factors, many of which may also relate to the democratic attitudes and behaviours that comprise our dependent variables. ‘Propensity score matching’ partially resolved the self-selection bias by comparing the dependent variables for each individual in the treatment group with the score for the individual in the control group who was *most similar* to the treatment individual on the set of confounding variables that relate to both treatment exposure and the study’s dependent variables (see Guo and Fraser 2010).

The Three Country Study, however, was limited by design because it used one-shot retrospective surveys to compare treatment and control respondents only after they already had been trained. This made it impossible to reject completely the hypothesis that they were already more ‘democratic’ than the control groups *before* they attended civic education activities. Propensity score matching also does not control for *unmeasured* or *unobserved* factors such as motivation or personality attributes that led individuals to select into the treatment as well. If these factors were also related to the democratic orientations tested in the study, then the treatment effects would be estimated with bias.

2.2 The Kenya National Civic Education Programme (NCEP I) Evaluation, 2001-03

These methodological limitations were overcome to a considerable extent in the next USAID-sponsored civic education evaluation, a longitudinal analysis of the effects of the National Civic Education Programme in Kenya (NCEP I) from 2001-03.⁶ The programme itself was an ambitious, countrywide effort consisting of some 50,000 workshops, lectures, plays and puppet shows, and community meetings co-ordinated by over 80 Kenyan NGOs in order to promote democratic values, awareness, and political engagement among ordinary Kenyan citizens in the run-up to the 2002 elections and the ongoing constitutional review process that had begun some years earlier. The aim of the programme, as stated in the NCEP’s Programme Document, was ‘... to promote general awareness of democratic principles, the practice of good governance, the rule of law, and constitutionalism’. An estimated four and a half million people—roughly 17 per cent of the adult Kenyan population—attended at least one of the programme’s activities, making it one of the largest adult civic education programmes conducted to date (Finkel 2003b).

The evaluation incorporated several features that allowed substantially more definitive conclusions regarding programme impact than was possible in the previous study. For one, the treatment itself was standardized to a much greater extent than in the other countries, as the implementing NGOs spent nearly two years developing a common curriculum for the

⁵ For more details on the sampling and survey procedures for this study, see Finkel (2003a).

⁶ This study was commissioned by USAID/Nairobi in 2001 and also implemented by Management Systems International. See Finkel (2003b) for more details on the study procedures.

overall initiative. More importantly, interviews were conducted with individuals *before and after* they attended civic education workshops, so that the changes associated with civic education could be observed directly. Interviews were conducted with approximately 3,600 individuals, half of whom were interviewed just before they were to attend one of 181 selected NCEP I workshops, and half of whom were to serve as part of the ‘control group’ who were not exposed to a civic education ‘treatment’. A random sample of these individuals—equally divided between control and treatment groups—was re-interviewed some months after the NCEP I was completed. It was therefore possible to determine with greater certainty that the treatment group individuals actually were ‘treated’, as opposed to relying solely on retrospective self-reports as in the first study. The causal effects of the programme were estimated by observing the changes in survey responses related to democratic orientations, behaviour, and constitutional awareness over time among individuals who attended NCEP civic education workshops, and determining whether those changes were significantly greater than the changes among individuals who were not exposed to civic education messages. This ‘difference-in-difference’ set-up controls much more effectively for baseline (pre-treatment) differences between the treatment and control groups than is possible in cross-sectional research.

2.3 The Kenya NCEP II-Uraia evaluation, 2007-08

A third USAID-sponsored evaluation was commissioned in 2008 to assess the Second Kenya National Civic Education Programme in terms of changing individuals’ awareness, competence and engagement in issues related to democracy, conflict, human rights, governance, constitutionalism, and nation-building.⁷ The programme took the name ‘Uraia’, meaning ‘citizenship’ in Kiswahili. Forty-three Kenyan NGOs linked to four larger civil society consortia took part in the programme, which ran from 2006-07 and involved approximately 79,000 discrete workshops, poetry or drama events, informal meetings, cultural gatherings, and other public events. Programme documents indicate that the programme’s activities reached roughly the same proportion of Kenyans as did NCEP I.

It was not possible to conduct baseline (pre-exposure) surveys in connection with this evaluation. Moreover, given the difficulties of travel and security in the wake of the post-2007 election violence, post-test interviews had to be delayed until December 2008. Over the next two months, 1,800 individuals who had been exposed to NCEP II-Uraia face-to-face activities were interviewed as the treatment group, along with 1,800 control group individuals who were similar to the treatment group but who had no NCEP II-Uraia face-to-face exposure. Treatment group individuals were selected based on a two-stage random sampling process: first, a random sample of 360 NCEP II-Uraia activities was selected, then five specific treatment group respondents were interviewed based on a random sampling of households where the selected activities took place. Finally, a detailed procedure was implemented to interview five control group individuals from those same areas, and who were matched to the treatment group on a series of demographic characteristics, including education, age, gender, and membership in civil society organizations.

This study differed from previous evaluations in two ways. First, the programme was implemented amidst a context that was deeply conflicted by partisan and ethnic polarization. The 2007 election campaign was highly divisive, bringing long-standing communal

⁷ This study was commissioned by USAID/Nairobi in 2008 and also implemented by Management Systems International. See Finkel and Horowitz (2009) for more details on the study procedures.

grievances over economic and political inequalities to the fore, exacerbating resentments and hostilities between ethnic communities (Horowitz 2011). Disputes over the outcome of the election, which was widely believed to have been stolen, sparked a wave of ethnic violence in which more than 1,000 people were killed and at least 300,000 more were displaced. The post-election violence affected at least a quarter of the Kenyan population and lasted over two months until a power-sharing agreement was reached in late February 2008 by the main political parties. Given the programme's goals to encourage non-violent conflict resolution and promote a national identity, the political context provided an opportunity to examine the impact of civic education in a more difficult, conflict-laden and 'backsliding' democratic environment.

Second, the study was only formally commissioned in September 2008, some nine months after the election and the violence that took place in the election's aftermath. This means that the study represents an assessment of the *longer-term impact* of the NCEP II-Uraia programme, as individuals were unable to be interviewed at or around the time that the NCEP II-Uraia interventions took place. Previous studies generally relied on surveys conducted relatively shortly after the programmes ended, making it impossible to determine whether the observed effects were transitory or more enduring. So while the NCEP II-Uraia evaluation presented some methodological challenges, it also provided an important opportunity to examine the longer-term effects of civic education programmes.

2.4 The impact of VOICE in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2011-12

The final and most recent USAID-sponsored evaluation considered here is a study assessing the effects of the *Voter Opinion and Involvement through Civic Education Programme* (VOICE) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The VOICE programme, implemented by the Washington, DC-based International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), was designed to improve the capacity of the Congolese people to participate effectively in the decentralization process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This process, mandated by law in 2007, calls for the reorganization of the country's administrative units, and increases the powers of local and provincial governments in order to improve accountability and include subnational units in the country's political, economic, and social development. The evaluation focused on the civic education-related activity of the VOICE programme, the '*Boîtes à Images*' sessions that were designed to stimulate community level discussion and learning about decentralization and broader issues of democratic development. These sessions, lasting approximately two hours with audiences of approximately 100 individuals, were conducted throughout 2010 and 2011 in four target provinces—South Kivu, Maniema, Kantanga, and Bandundu.

Interviews were conducted through a Congolese survey company with a random sample of 1,120 individuals in eight 'treatment' villages where *Boîtes à Images* sessions took place in addition to a random sample of 480 individuals in eight comparable 'control' villages where the programme was not active. Baseline interviews were conducted with all respondents before the sessions took place in treatment villages, and all respondents were re-interviewed some days or weeks after the *Boîtes* sessions took place. The survey instrument contained an extensive battery of questions to measure the individuals' knowledge of the decentralization process and of political institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, support for decentralization and for changes in the authority of local governments in various policy areas, support for democratic values and processes, perceived political knowledge and competence,

and levels of political discussion and participation. Comparing the changes observed in treatment villages with changes observed in control villages provides an estimate of the programme's *total effects*, i.e., the effects on individuals directly exposed to the *Boîtes* sessions along with any secondary effects within treatment villages that may have taken place through post-workshop discussions.

In order to isolate the *direct* effect of treatment on programme participants, the study also included an innovative randomized experimental component within treatment villages to effectively address the problem of self-selection into civic education treatments. The study adopted what is known as an 'encouragement design' (Duflo et al. 2007), in which some randomly selected individuals (in this case, 100) were encouraged in the baseline interview to attend the upcoming *Boîtes à Images* event in the village, while others (in this case, 40) were not given such encouragement. Given that randomization equates 'encouraged' individuals with 'non-encouraged' individuals on all observed *as well as unobserved* factors, a simple comparison of these two groups in terms of democratic outcomes gives one indication of the effect of the programme controlling for self-selection biases. More complex analysis was also conducted where the randomized encouragement variable was used as a proxy or so-called 'instrumental variable' for self-reported (and self-selected) *Boîtes* attendance, with this procedure estimating the effects of the programme for 'compliers' with the manipulation, i.e., the set of individuals who were pushed into attendance by the exogenous encouragement but who otherwise would not have taken part in the *Boîtes* session. The experimental manipulations thus gave the study greater leverage with which to make inferences about the effects of direct exposure to civic education programmes than was possible in the previous studies.

3 Major results

The studies have produced a wealth of information about the extent to which civic education programmes have affected orientations related to information, civic competence, democratic values and political engagement. Moreover, they point to programme designs that best maximize individual level impacts. The most notable results from the studies are discussed below; more details can be found in the studies' associated reports and academic publications.

3.1 The basic effect: civic education can be a powerful source of political information

One central finding of the studies is that civic education programmes can indeed be successful in what may be considered their most basic task, that is, in providing factual information about democratic political processes and institutions. In each of the four impact evaluations, exposure to the civic education 'treatment' had significant effects on political knowledge of various kinds, with some of these effects being quite large in magnitude. In the VOICE evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, individuals were asked six questions about the planned decentralization processes, ranging from very general ('Does decentralization give more power/less power/about the same amount of power to the central government in Kinshasa?') to very specific ('Under the new decentralization laws, what share of the money for local government is to come from the central government in Kinshasa?'). For all six items, there were significantly greater changes over time in 'correct' responses from individuals in the eight villages where *Boîtes à Images* sessions took place than among individuals in the eight control villages, with these 'differences-in-differences'

often of large magnitude. In the post-*Boîtes* wave of observation, roughly 60 per cent of individuals in the treatment villages correctly identified the new decentralization funding institution (the *Caisse Nationale de Péréquation*) and correctly noted the proportion of funds that would be transferred to localities; these represented increases of approximately 42 per cent from the baseline survey, compared to changes of only 10 per cent in control villages. These effects are even more dramatic if one examines the proportions of individuals who increased *at all* in their decentralization knowledge over time. In control villages, just over 1/3 of all individuals (36 per cent) registered *some* increase over time; this figure nearly doubles to 69 per cent, or more than 2/3 of all individuals in the treatment villages. Further analysis shows that, within the treatment villages, the best estimate of the *direct* impact among ‘compliers’ of attending the *Boîtes à Images* session was to increase decentralization knowledge by a full three ‘correct’ answers out of the six questions asked. These are powerful effects, and among the largest seen for any of the democratic orientations examined across the four impact evaluations.

Strong effects on political knowledge and awareness were also seen in the NCEP Kenya evaluations. As noted above, one of the main goals of the 2001-02 programme was to increase general and specific knowledge regarding the ongoing constitutional reform process. We found large differences in the changes observed among individuals who were exposed to National Civic Education Programme workshops versus control individuals on a series of constitutional knowledge and awareness orientations. Individuals who attended workshops were more likely to report increased awareness of the contents of the constitution, increased likelihood of having seen the document itself, increased awareness of the various proposals being discussed to reform the constitution, with the changes among treated individuals being nearly double to those observed among the control group. These differences, again, were the largest effects of NCEP exposure in the entire Kenyan study. NCEP workshop exposure was also associated with a significant increase in the individual’s actual knowledge of certain constitutional provisions. Some 60 per cent of individuals who attended NCEP activities increased to some extent on general political knowledge (comprising questions related to the length of the president’s term in office to questions on the commissioner in the individual’s province), compared to just over 30 per cent of control individuals who registered positive change. Similar patterns were found in each of the other impact evaluations, though with effects of somewhat lesser magnitude. Civic education, then, can be a powerful conduit for promoting political knowledge and fostering a more informed citizenry in emerging democracies.

3.2 Hierarchy of effects: participation, civic competence, democratic values

The impact evaluations conducted thus far show a clear pattern of effects on a wide range of other democratic orientations as well. More specifically, they have shown relatively consistent and large effects of civic education on *local level political participation*, moderate effects on orientations related to *civic competence*, and weaker and more sporadic effects on *democratic values*. This ‘hierarchy of effects’ indicates that it is indeed possible to *mobilize* individuals and to foster feelings of political *empowerment* via civic education, but that it is much more difficult to instill the deeper values of trust, tolerance, and support for democratic regimes and processes.

One of the most important findings is the consistent and relatively large effect of civic education training on *local level political participation*. In the Three Country Study, for

example, individuals who were exposed to civic education were significantly more active in local politics than were individuals in the control groups. Among the three countries, the largest effects were seen in Poland, where civic education training by itself led to an increase of one additional instance of local level political behaviour on the part of trained individuals, with average increases of one-third to one-half of an additional behaviour for those trained in the other countries. Further analysis (Finkel 2002) suggested that an important distinction could be made between different types of programmes: programmes (such as *Grupo Acción por la Democracia* in the Dominican Republic and *Foundation for Support of Local Democracy* in Poland) that focus directly on local level problem solving and community action demonstrated far greater impact on participation than programmes characterized by general information-based workshops (such as ADOPEM in the Dominican Republic and the three programmes in South Africa). These programmes comprise an explicit form of political mobilization: individuals are brought together for problem solving activities and put into contact with local leaders, and hence they learn how and through what channels to participate in local politics. The heightened participation reflects the participatory skills that individuals developed through the programmes, as well as the specific opportunities and channels for participation that the programme provided. Civic education, then, can have powerful behavioural effects when it is conducted through secondary associations that are actively engaged in local problem-solving and community organizing.

The programmes also enhanced individuals' feelings of political efficacy and empowerment, though the size of these effects was generally smaller than for political participation. In every country aside from the Democratic Republic of Congo, civic education programmes fostered an increased sense of 'internal political efficacy', or a belief in the individual's abilities to influence the political system. In the first Kenya study, for example, the treatment group had nearly double the probability of increasing on political efficacy over time than the control group. Similar effects were seen on 'civic skills', i.e., on perceptions of one's abilities to influence others and to 'contact people to get things done', in Kenya as well as in the Three Country Study. Thus civic education has had positive influence not only on local level participation, but also on several important cognitive and attitudinal precursors of participation as well.

At the same time, these programmes had more limited impact on adherence to democratic values and on support for political institutions. One highly important democratic value, political tolerance improved modestly in Kenya and in the Three Country Study (see also Finkel 2003a; Finkel and Smith 2011). But on the other values we examined, there were few consistent differences between individuals who were exposed to civic education programmes and those who were not. The VOICE impact evaluation for example, showed virtually *no* effects on any of the democracy-related values examined, including support for decentralization, support for democracy, or satisfaction with Congolese democratic institutions. Similarly, aside from relatively modest effects on tolerance and the individuals' national identity, the first Kenya study showed no effects on support for democracy, trust, or satisfaction with democracy. In the Three Country Study, institutional trust improved slightly in South Africa and fell slightly in the Dominican Republic, which may be interpreted as reflecting the relatively antagonistic relationship between the implementing NGOs and the government in the Dominican Republic in contrast with the more supportive relationship in post-apartheid South Africa (see also Finkel et al. 2000).

Overall, however, the results show that civic education had generally less success in changing democratic values than in fostering civic competence, engagement and political participation.

This ‘hierarchy of effects’ highlights the difficulties in changing deep-seated democratic values through short-term democracy programmes, and points to the difficulties in assuming that increasing *information* about democracy or democratic processes will necessarily lead to increased *support* for democracy or democratic attitudinal change. But the hierarchy also shows that civic education programmes can be relatively effective agents of political empowerment and mobilization of individuals into the democratic political system; this is no small accomplishment given the severe social, political, and economic barriers to participation for ordinary individuals in many emerging democratic contexts.

3.3 Threshold effects: the importance of frequent exposure to participatory, high quality instruction

There is strong evidence in every evaluation that factors related to the *duration* and *pedagogical nature* of the individual’s civic education experiences shaped the nature and degree of the programme’s impact. In fact, these findings paint a very definitive picture of the conditions under which adult civic education is most effective. First, the *frequency of attendance* at civic education activities is the most important determinant of individual change. Individuals who attended only one or two events often showed little change in democratic orientations, while there were relatively large gains—even on deep-seated democratic values such as political tolerance—from multiple workshop exposures. In some of the countries, moreover, ‘threshold’ effects were evident, such that a single civic education exposure had no impact, yet *all* of the changes concentrated among those individuals who attended multiple civic education activities. This finding strongly suggests that civic education programmes involving ‘one-off’ workshops or events will not be effective.

Second, in every context studied, civic education activities that incorporated more active, participatory teaching methods as opposed to lecture-based instruction have been significantly more effective in stimulating democratic change. In the first Kenya study, for example, we aggregated workshop participants’ reports of the teaching methodologies as a ‘contextual’ factor predicting the degree to which participants would improve on participation, knowledge, and other democratic orientations. The results showed unequivocally that workshops with more participatory teaching methods, such as breaking into small groups, staging plays, playing games, problem-solving, simulations or role-playing, had greater impact across the range of democratic orientations than did individuals who were primarily exposed to lecture-based instruction. This pattern was evident as well in the Three Country Study, such that positive effects occurred for many key variables *only* for participatory workshops. Again, the findings point to a very specific implication for civic education programming: instructional methodologies *must* involve and engage participants actively in order to impact individual democratic orientations.

Third, civic education activities with instructors that were perceived to be of higher quality also led to greater impact among those trained in every evaluation conducted thus far. Workshops conducted in all contexts were most effective when the leaders or trainers were perceived to be ‘knowledgeable’, ‘inspiring’, and ‘interested’, while trainers who did not engage or were not well-regarded by the participants had little success in transmitting democratic knowledge, values, or participatory inclinations.⁸ For example, in the VOICE evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, individuals who were most satisfied with

⁸ Perceived quality was measured by the individuals’ reported satisfaction with session organization, knowledge obtained, and instructor/facilitator competence (Finkel 2012).

the organization of the *Boîtes à Images* sessions and the competence of the trainers registered gains of nearly two and a half more correct responses on the set of political decentralization knowledge items than comparable control villagers, compared to gains of just less than one more correct response among treatment villagers who were least satisfied with the quality. The patterns observed in these studies are very clear: quality organization and competent facilitators matter greatly in determining the magnitude of civic education impact. These results suggest that programmes that devote more resources to teacher recruitment and training will likely see larger effects on programme participants.

Taken together, these findings provide important evidence that civic education, under the right conditions, can have substantial impact on democratic participation, values, and attitudes. But they also indicate that unless the ‘right conditions’ are met in practice, the overall effects of civic education programmes will be much weaker than desired. And here the evidence is not altogether positive. For example, only one-third of all civic education recipients in South Africa attended three or more workshops, and less than half were trained with a large number of active participatory teaching methodologies. Similarly, in the first Kenya evaluation, only a minority of individuals were trained frequently, with active, participatory methodologies, and by instructors who were perceived to be of high quality.

3.4 Secondary effects: civic education may influence non-participants

Evaluations also need to examine the potential *indirect* effects of civic education, whereby treated individuals may go on to discuss the lessons and ideas in the classes or workshops with untreated members of their social networks. To the extent that civic education stimulates these kinds of post-treatment discussions, democracy education may exert even greater impact on democratic political culture than previously recognized, as the ‘downstream’ effects of political discussions amplify the programmes’ direct effects. The Kenya studies and the evaluation of the VOICE programme tested for such spillovers, and they provide mixed evidence regarding the existence and magnitude of such effects.

After the workshops ended in the Kenya studies, individuals in the treatment group were asked with how many people and with whom they had discussed the ‘issues in the workshop’. All respondents, including those who attended workshops and those who did not, were asked the following question: ‘Setting aside any events or workshops that you attended personally, has anyone you know talked to you about events or workshops about democracy and the Constitution that they attended this past year?’. Respondents who answered yes were then asked to estimate the number of individuals who discussed their workshop experiences with the respondent. The studies showed that post-civic education discussions within social networks took place frequently. For example, responses to the NCEP I surveys, combined with a national survey of Kenyans conducted during the 2002 time period, indicate that over 40 per cent of the Kenyan adult public was reached either directly or indirectly by the first NCEP programme, with about two-thirds of this figure (i.e., over one-quarter of the Kenyan adult population) being achieved through secondary exposure.

The results showed significant effects for both discussion variables, but more powerful and consistent effects from discussing others’ workshop experiences. For example, respondents who attended three of the NCEP I workshops *and* spoke with five or more other individuals about their workshop experiences had about a two-in-three chance of increasing on political knowledge, compared to a one-in-three chance of increasing if the individuals *neither*

attended workshops nor spoke about others' workshop experiences. These effects are of substantial magnitude. The effects of post-workshop discussion were substantial *even for individuals who did not themselves attend any workshops*. In fact, there were greater chances of increasing knowledge among control group respondents who spoke to others about their workshop experiences than for many respondents who attended workshops themselves. The same pattern of effects was seen for other key variables in the first Kenya study, such as political participation, tolerance, and the sense of Kenyan versus ethnic or tribal identity (see also Finkel and Smith 2011).

These same findings regarding secondary effects were, however, *not* replicated in the recent VOICE evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Using a series of alternative methods—comparisons of respondents in treatment villages who did not attend the *Boîtes à Images* sessions with respondents in control villages; comparisons of the randomly selected individuals in treatment villages who were not 'encouraged' to attend the *Boîtes à Images* sessions with the randomly-selected respondents in control villages; and more complex simulations based on differing assumptions of the size of treatment effects for different types of individuals in the treatment and control villages—little evidence of secondary effects of the sessions was found on respondents who had not attended the *Boîtes* events. What might be responsible for the divergent results of the VOICE and Kenya evaluations? It may be the methodological limitations related to our relatively small sample size, the lack of specific information on individuals' social networks, or the fact that participants were not provided with materials that could be shared and discussed with others. But it is also plausible that attendance at the single and relatively brief *Boîtes à Images* session was not sufficient to stimulate the kind of post-treatment diffusion via interpersonal discussion necessary for secondary effects to occur, which would represent yet more evidence for the importance shown earlier of frequent exposure to 'high quality' civic education messages.

3.5 The duration of effects: long-term civic education impacts are consistent with the short-term patterns

Nearly all of the civic education evaluations conducted thus far have focused on relatively short-term effects, with the post-exposure interviews taking place anywhere from several weeks after exposure in the VOICE evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to several months after exposure in the Three Country and first Kenya studies. The second Kenya study, in which all post-treatment interviews were conducted *at least* 15 months after the NCEP II-Uraia activities ended, afforded the opportunity to assess whether programmes may have longer-lasting effects. The results show first, that a significant number of effects of the programme did endure over the year and a half to two years since the initial exposures, and second, that the 'hierarchy of effects' shown in earlier studies was very nearly exactly replicated when examining long-term impacts. NCEP II-Uraia produced significant long-term changes in the entire cluster of orientations related to participation and 'civic competence'. Individuals who were exposed to NCEP II-Uraia face-to-face activities were significantly more participatory at the local level, more knowledgeable about politics, more politically efficacious, more aware of how to defend their rights, and more informed about constitutional issues and the desirability of public involvement in the constitutional review process, than were 'matched' control group individuals who did not participate in NCEP II-Uraia activities.

However, the long-term effects of NCEP II-Uraia civic education on democratic orientations aside from civic competence and involvement were much more limited. On democratic

values, only a few statistically significant effects were registered, with none being of large substantive magnitude. On most of the variables associated with this dimension—support for democracy, support for the rule of law, trust in institutions, inter-personal trust, and acceptance of extensive political responsibilities of citizenship—the long-term effects of NCEP II-Uraia were statistically indistinguishable from zero. There were, however, some long-term effects registered on factors related to identity and ethnic group relations. NCEP II-Uraia activities led to significant increases in individuals' identification as a 'Kenyan' relative to their tribal identification, led to significant increases in the amount of social tolerance the individual is willing to extend to his or her 'most disliked group', and led to significant increases in the rejection of political violence. These effects, while certainly welcome, were substantively weak in magnitude and certainly weaker than those seen for civic competence and participation. As with the short-term findings, it may be concluded that adult civic education is primarily effective as a longer-term agent of political *empowerment*, but is a less effective long-term agent for changing values and increasing support for democratic political processes.

3.6 The context of effects: civic education can be effective in 'backsliding' or conflict settings

The results of the NCEP II-Uraia Kenya evaluation also shed light on how civic education functions in contexts characterized by relatively high levels of ethnic conflict and political violence. As opposed to the previous evaluations, where the context was either highly favourable towards democratic change (late 1990s Poland and South Africa, Kenya 2002) or at worst in a stalled democratic transition (late 1990s Dominican Republic), Kenya at the time of the NCEP II-Uraia activities was deeply polarized along ethnic and tribal lines and deeply dissatisfied with the lack of democratic progress that had been made since the 'breakthrough election' of 2002. Moreover, the election campaign itself dramatically heightened the lines of social and political conflict, and, in the wake of a contested election outcome, the country became tragically engulfed in large-scale ethnic violence. The context in which the civic education evaluation was conducted, then, was a much less favourable setting in which to observe democratic change. And to this extent, the results discussed above, where the NCEP II-Uraia programme did exert significant long-term effects on orientations such as local level participation, civic competence, as well as modest effects on key values related to the disapproval of political violence and an increased sense of Kenyan identity, are all the more impressive.

The study provides an opportunity to examine more deeply how conflict or backsliding democratic environments may mitigate or temper the positive effects of civic education shown thus far in this essay. By disaggregating the treatment group into those who reported being affected by the post-election violence and those who were not, and comparing impacts of the NCEP II-Uraia programme for these two groups relative to their respective control groups, we can determine the extent to which the post-election violence may have reduced the programme's impact among violence-afflicted respondents. Individuals were asked whether 'you or your family was affected by the violence that occurred after the 2007 election'; 31 per cent of the treatment group and 27 per cent of the control group reported that they had been affected. Little support was found for the hypothesis that the violence reduced the impact of NCEP II-Uraia activities among those individuals who were exposed to civic education. For the most part, the magnitude of the effects was relatively similar among the two kinds of treatment group respondents. On several key ethnic-related variables, moreover,

there were *stronger* impacts among treatment group respondents who were directly affected by the violence compared with treatment group respondents who were not. This suggests that NCEP II-Uraia activities had longer-lasting impact on some ethnic-related attitudes among those individuals who experienced the upheavals following the 2007 election directly, and that exposure to the programme may actually have mitigated some of the negative effects that the post-election violence had on these orientations.

This interpretation is strengthened when examining responses to another set of questions asked concerning the traumatic events following the 2007 election. Respondents were asked if the violence changed their preference for democracy, their perceived capacity to influence political processes, their willingness to consider views of other ethnic groups, and/or their optimism about democracy in Kenya. Positive responses on these items mean that the impact of the post-election upheavals caused individuals to become *less* optimistic about Kenyan democracy, their roles in it, and their consideration of other ethnic groups' points of view. The overall responses to these questions are revealing, in that between 62 per cent and 72 per cent of all respondents 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with each of the statements.

The impact that direct experience with post-election violence had on each of these orientations was then estimated among individuals who were exposed to NCEP II-Uraia civic education activities and individuals who were not. On two of these dimensions, *Perceived Influence* and *Consider Other Ethnic Views*, the effect of personal experience with violence had strong effects on these variables *only among the control group*. That is, individuals in the control group who directly experienced post-election violence became more pessimistic about their role in Kenyan democracy, and less willing to consider the views of other ethnic groups, while no such negative impact occurred among the treatment group. This is suggestive evidence that not only can civic education 'work' in contexts characterized by widespread ethnic and political conflict and violence, but it may even have the effect of 'inoculating' individuals against some of the more deleterious effects of the violence itself.

4 Conclusions and new directions in civic education evaluation research

We have by now accumulated a large and relatively consistent body of evidence about what adult civic education programmes can and cannot achieve in terms of promoting democratic orientations in emerging democracies and about how the programmes should be designed in order to maximize individual level effects. The results reported here, from four impact evaluations of civic education programmes in five country contexts conducted over the past fifteen years, provide an emphatic 'yes' to the most basic question of whether these programmes can contribute to the development of democratic political culture. In every evaluation, civic education programmes were found to be significant instruments for increasing individuals' political information, feelings of empowerment, and levels of political participation. In the one evaluation that allowed long-term effects to be estimated, moreover, it was found that the impact of civic education exposure on these orientations was still evident nearly a year and a half after the programme had ended. It was also found that programmes can be effective even in contexts characterized by democratic 'backsliding' and heightened levels of political and social conflict. And there are also intriguing possibilities that civic education effects may diffuse within treated individuals' social networks, though the evidence here is not as yet conclusive.

At the same time, there is much that we have learned about what civic education programmes in emerging democratic contexts *cannot* do. In every study conducted to date, far weaker effects have been found from these programmes on fundamental democratic values such as political tolerance, support, and trust, than on the ‘empowerment’ and engagement factors mentioned above. These values are indispensable components of stable democracies, and it therefore bears emphasis that civic education programmes to this point have been relatively less capable of fostering these aspects of democratic political culture, compared with their demonstrable effects on civic engagement. Moreover, the magnitude of *all* the civic education effects depends critically on how programmes are designed, the kinds of pedagogical methods employed and the quality of the programme’s facilitators or trainers. It may be concluded, then, that adult civic education has the *potential* to exert substantial impact on a wide range of orientations related to democratic political culture, but that this potential is often not fully realized in practice.

Over the past several years, a significant amount of civic education evaluation work has emerged that promises to take the field in important new directions. Three developments are particularly noteworthy. First, a number of studies are moving beyond a focus on the political culture democratic orientations examined thus far, i.e., efficacy, trust, tolerance, and the like, to assess the impact of civic education information campaigns on specific outcomes related to improving good governance in emerging democracies. Much of this work (e.g., Banerjee et al. 2011; Gottlieb 2012; Chong et al. 2010; Vicente 2007) examines the impact of civic information campaigns on the extent to which individuals hold incumbents accountable, e.g., how information presented in the programmes affects the likelihood that individuals will cast votes based on the actual performance of incumbents in office as opposed to voting on ethnic or clientelistic grounds.

Second, increased attention has been given to civic education in areas beset by ethnic violence and political conflict. Similar to the examination above of the Kenya NCEP II-Uraia programme that included ethnic tolerance and anti-violence messages in a broad civic education curriculum, Collier and Vicente (2010) and Fafchamps and Vicente (2013, forthcoming) assess a more specific anti-violence campaign conducted in Nigeria in the run-up to national and state elections in 2007. Other recent studies examine the impact of civic education campaigns related to conflict resolution in post-Rwanda (Paluck and Green 2009) and in Liberia (Blattman et al. 2012). These studies provide additional encouragement that civic education can ‘work’ even in difficult conflict-laden environments, and also point to promising future research on the ways that mass media campaigns may achieve comparable improvements in individual learning and collective behaviour as traditional face-to-face civic education campaigns.⁹

Finally, this ‘second generation’ of civic education impact evaluations is noteworthy for its use of randomized field experimental methods as the means of identifying the causal effects of the programmes. Experimental methods more effectively control for potential biases that are likely to be present when assessing the impact of civic education programmes in which participation is entirely voluntary and self-selected. To this extent, the rise of field experimental methods is an important development in the field and the use of these methods is to be encouraged in future work.

⁹ See also a follow-up study conducted by Paluck in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute that examined a radio-based civic education intervention related to conflict resolution in Sudan (Paluck 2009).

But significant challenges remain in the application of randomized designs as well. Randomization often changes the ways that NGOs implement civic education programmes, for example, by affecting the areas where the programme is conducted or the manner in which participants are mobilized for treatment, thus raising issues related to the ‘external validity’ or generalizability of the findings. Similarly, many of the randomized evaluations conducted thus far have been on relatively small-scale programmes that allow for the co-operation of the researchers and the implementing NGOs; researchers will need to think creatively about how to use randomized methods to evaluate ‘scaled-up’ national initiative such as the NCEP programmes in Kenya. Perhaps the most imperative challenge, though, is to design evaluations that can test some of the more important findings from observational studies, namely the overriding importance of the nature and quality of the civic education instruction, the role of civic education in providing potential ‘inoculation’ against the potential negative impacts of political violence, and the possibility of secondary effects of civics instruction. As noted, some initial headway has been made on this last challenge (Fafchamps and Vicente 2013, forthcoming; see also Giné and Mansuri 2010), and, as additional evaluations are conducted that are able to manipulate the type, timing, and quality of instruction, we can expect further advances in our knowledge of how civic education programmes can effectively foster democratic learning and value change in emerging democracies.

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