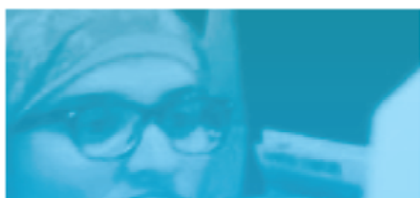
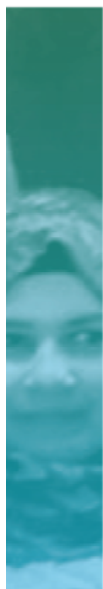




Youth Theories of Change Workshop



The international development community has recognized the need to invest in youth. Today's youth – the largest, most educated, connected and open-minded generation the world has ever seen – have demonstrated their potential to accelerate global progress.¹ There is little evidence, however, of what enables young people to overcome the various political, sociocultural and institutional barriers that often prevent them from meaningful participation in decisions affecting their welfare and that of their communities.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has involved young men and women in its programs for more than 20 years and is currently conducting an in-depth review of how best to support youth political participation. With a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), NDI is examining its program lessons, drawing on the experiences of other development practitioners, gathering the perspectives of young people and considering the academic research. As part of this process, conversations with staff members from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) helped NDI identify the need to critically analyze theories of change surrounding youth political participation programs, with an eye toward the relationship between positive youth development and participation.

In an effort to build a stronger foundation for cogent theories of change and effective program interventions, NDI convened 30 development practitioners in the field of democracy, human rights and governance for a day-long workshop to discuss youth political participation programs. The workshop had the following objective and anticipated outcomes²:

Objective: Deepen understanding among democracy, human rights & governance development practitioners of how youth political participation can best be supported, what changes should result from our support and how can we improve learning.

- Outcome: Describe the working theories of change that frame youth political participation efforts
- Outcome: Define the critical assumptions and considerations for efforts to support youth political participation based on empirical lessons
- Outcome: Identify the gaps in understanding about what works and does not in youth political participation and potential areas for future research.

While the event did not produce a clear set of conclusions about “what works” in supporting youth political participation, it did help highlight key considerations when planning programs involving youth, such as paying attention to the diversity that exists among young people and the need to tailor programs to different contexts. Additionally, workshop discussions produced key questions for further consideration

¹ International agreements, such as the 2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's 2010 resolution on youth participation underscore the importance of young people having a political voice.

² A list of workshop participants is attached with a complete agenda.

and identified what evidence and knowledge still needs to be collected in order to improve youth political participation programming.

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Crafting Theories of Change

Theories of change are critical for informing development interventions. They provide a clear reasoning that distills how and why a program will achieve desired changes.

Too often, however, programs are based on assumptions that seem more like leaps of faith.

For example, a common theory of change for a youth programs is:

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This theory is based on several assumptions, including:

- People who work together to solve problems **see that collective action works** to improve the world around them.
- Other people in the community **will come to see young people as change agents** and rely on them more as leaders
- Young people will therefore be **more likely to take action in the future and become valued members of the community**

When scrutinized, these assumptions rely on a number of factors (bolded above). First, this assumption is conditional upon young people's collective action to improve the world around them being successful. What if young people fail to mobilize or achieve their goals? The second assumption requires public support for young people's efforts. What if there is not universal support for the change that young people are trying to achieve, or for that group of young people, specifically?

It is important to unpack these assumptions to develop more realistic theories of change. One helpful way to approach this is to repeatedly ask "why" when outlining expectations about how change happens. Upon further examination, the theory of change provided above can be expanded to the following:

³ A power point about developing theories of change is attached.

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This expanded theory of change provides a stronger rationale with explicit relationships between elements.

An effective theory of change also needs to reflect the specific context. For example, in a particular cultural context, negative stereotypes and attitudes about young people's role in society may dominate and prevent meaningful opportunities to demonstrate the value of organized youth voices. Leadership development and skills building will only go so far, if young people do not have the space or the support from other segments of society. These nuanced factors could invalidate the above theory of change, unless work is also done to gain support from political party leaders, for example.

Being Inclusive in Our Youth Programs

Democracy is more likely to develop and endure when all citizens of a country are able to participate in political processes and influence political outcomes without suffering discrimination or reprisal. "Youth" represents a diverse demographic, with wide variations in individual circumstances based on gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, geographic location, socioeconomic background and sexual orientation.

When designing political participation programs involving youth, it is important to take an intersectional approach, recognizing that young people with different backgrounds may have⁵ different needs and priorities and likely face different barriers in accessing political life. In this regard, it is critical to ask "which youth?" Traditionally marginalized groups will only achieve full political inclusion when discriminatory norms and practices that exclude them at the socio-cultural, institutional and individual levels are

⁴ A power point on inclusive youth programming is attached.

⁵

eliminated. At a base level, gender equality must be central consideration in youth political participation programs.

To assess varying barriers to political participation, implementers can conduct a gender analysis to determine how gender norms and inequities impact the ability of different groups of men and women and girls and boys differently in participating in public life. In addition, a broader inclusion lens can be applied to identify barriers and adapt programs to ensure access and opportunity to as many groups of people as possible. An intersectional approach recognizes the unique ways that multiple identities and forms of discrimination affect different people's participation in political life. Forms of programming can take a mainstreaming approach that includes as many identity groups as possible, or programs can target specific marginalized groups. Modeling inclusion in political participation programs can help establish new norms and lead to social and political change for more democratic and inclusive societies.

Applying Positive Youth Development Principles

PYD recognizes young people as part of the solution to many development challenges. It is an approach and philosophy that focuses on **engaging** youth along with their **families, communities and/or governments** so that youth are **empowered** to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build **skills, assets and competencies**; foster healthy **relationships**; strengthen the **environment**; and transform **systems**.

DELIBERATING ON PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND THE CHANGE THAT MATTERS

Working in small groups, workshop participants began to explore what youth program are intended to achieve and why it matters.

In general, there are two ways to categorize youth political participation program objectives:

The former emphasizes the equal participation of all citizens as an intrinsic democratic norm, while the latter embraces the potential of young people as a force for positive change.

Many programs supporting youth political participation are framed as preparing new generation of young “democratic” citizens capable of fulfilling their responsibilities and

⁶ A power point explaining PYD is attached.

taking on leadership roles when the opportunities arise. There is value in these programs in one form or another across most contexts. Objectives can include:

- Youth are represented in political institutions and processes
- Youth develop a sense of civic duty
- Youth are more connected to communities and have a sense of belonging
- Youth are less likely to use violence
- Youth have greater trust in political institutions
- Youth have knowledge, skills and values they can apply as future leaders

While research shows that today's young people in most parts of the world are less engaged in formal politics than previous generations were, young men and women have been central to a host of informal political movements demanding more democratic governance, such as the 'Arab Spring' uprisings across the Middle East & North Africa. Some youth political participation programs seek to capitalize on this potential for young people to act as a transformative force. These programs often seek to take advantage of an immediate opportunity or entry point for young people to increase their political influence. Such an opportunity can be an effort by political leadership to include young people in framing a new constitution or deciding development priorities. Young people can also take advantage of other political entry points, such as an electoral period, to take a lead role in organizing themselves around issues (e.g., employment or education) that may be important to a wide cross section of citizens. Young people might also be at the forefront of monitoring election processes or turning out voters. These also serve as learning opportunities for young people where they can develop their political capacities in an action-oriented manner.

This approach recognizes that young people have assets that they can bring to politics. For example, young people are often more optimistic about their ability to facilitate change. In addition, studies show that young people are more open-minded, and therefore may be able to bring new ideas to the table. In this regard, they can lead civic innovation and connecting technology and politics. They may also be more open to new political practices or joining a new political party. There is also some evidence that young people may be more inclusive; the IPU found that gender imbalances are less pronounced among younger members of parliament. Greater experience and know-how in using technology can also be an advantage for youth in proposing innovative ways to make political processes more efficient, transparent and scalable.

In more politically restrictive environments, young people may be able to work openly to address issues that are less politically threatening, such as service delivery problems or accessibility issues for people with disabilities.

Specific program objectives discussed during the workshop that emphasize immediate political action for change include:

- Youth form advisory councils to inform pro-youth government policies
- Youth organize to reform public sector institutions (e.g., university entrance exams, government hiring practices, military service requirements)
- Youth advocate for improved public services
- Youth bridge ethnic divides
- Young party activists join forces to mitigate politically inspired violence

Scrutinizing these program objectives begs the question

Value can certainly be found in programs that increase young people's democratic knowledge and skills, improves their self confidence, provides opportunities for networking and relationship building with peers, or contribute to political change that advances democracy and development. However, understanding how to connect results at the individual level to an ultimate goal of sustained political participation, greater political inclusivity, and democratization is the challenge. Research on the long-term effects of civic education, civic engagement and leadership, and other programs on youth political participation are limited, and the studies that have been done provide little evidence of what works.

Discussions explored where young people may find viable opportunities to build their capacity, develop support networks, advance to leadership positions and affect positive change within a political system. Participants raised the below points on this topic:

- Young people today are less likely to vote in elections and less present in formal political institutions like political parties, but are more participatory in informal political movements, groups and protests.⁷
- Political party youth wings can provide some opportunity for young people to join a party, build skills and discuss issues that particularly affect young people, but they do not always allow opportunities for meaningful participation and influence. Members of youth wings often report feeling isolated within the party.
- Similarly, when young people are elected to public leadership, they often feel like their opinions and input are ignored and overruled by senior officials.
- Limited opportunities for meaningful participation in political parties or public office likely contribute to greater youth presence in civil society organizations, informal community groups, or protests and other social movements.

⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union,

SUGGESTING THEORIES OF CHANGE, CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

NDI, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and Counterpart International presented brief vignettes of current and recent youth political participation programs in Bangladesh, Jordan, Nicaragua and Uganda. Each program presentation laid out a theory of change, which fed into succeeding small group discussions to analyze theories of change for youth development programs.

The small group discussions produced some working theories of change and highlighted critical assumptions and considerations. When looking closer at these theories of change, as well as those presented in the program vignettes, it is possible to identify a range of social, political and cultural elements that affect youth political participation programs. These elements may be important to consider in all contexts when designing youth political participation programs. The table below outlines these theories of change and the elements that they collectively seek to address.

Theory of Change	Elements	Expected Outcome
<u>Bangladesh Leadership Development Program (Counterpart International)</u> : The LDP program's theory of change is premised on the idea that a more educated and highly skilled youth and adult leaders will create a critical mass of citizen engagement where citizens both take responsibility for their own development and hold local governments accountable for their role in service delivery and the development process.	-Youth and adult leaders gain knowledge and skills -Build a critical mass of engaged citizens who take responsibility for their own development	Young people and adults hold local governments accountable for their role in service delivery and development process
<u>Uganda Political Leadership Academy (IRI)</u> : If young political activists are able to develop their knowledge and understanding of the core principles of democracy and best practices for political participation and advocacy, while receiving support from a peer	-Young political activists develop knowledge and understanding of democratic principles and key political skills -Young people have support from a peer	Youth will be able to forge new or better opportunities for effective political engagement

network of other young political leaders within their community and also have the opportunity to increase and demonstrate their leadership capacity, then they will be able to forge new or better opportunities for more effective political engagement.	network of other young leaders -Young people have the opportunity to improve and demonstrate their leadership capacity	
<u>Jordan Ana Usharek ("I Participate") program (NDI):</u> If more young people are equipped with political knowledge and skills and guided in taking opportunities to address issues important to them through political means, they will be more likely to engage in politics, increase faith in public institutions and act as a force for and greater political inclusion of young people.	-Young people gain political knowledge and skills -Young people are guided in addressing issues important them through political means	Young people are more likely to engage in politics, increasing faith in institutions, and act as a force for youth political inclusion
<u>Nicaragua Democratic Leadership Development Program (NDI):</u> If young community leaders and civic organizations from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, gender, geographic and other backgrounds are supported with the skills, opportunities and long-term, flexible technical assistance to take a lead role in engaging political actors to seek change on issues important to them, they will be able to break down barriers to their political inclusion, achieve a greater level of equality and strengthen democratic practices.	-Diverse young community leaders gain improved political skills -Young leaders have opportunities to engage political leaders to seek change -Young leaders have long-term technical guidance	Youth will be able to break down barriers to their political inclusion, achieve a greater level of equality and strengthen democratic practices

<p>1: If youth have equal opportunities for meaningful action and influence, then they are more likely to participate constructively in the political sphere</p> <p>2: If decision-makers/power holders increase their awareness of the value & mechanisms for youth political inclusion, then they are more likely to create equal opportunities & open space for youth to engage/participate in the political sphere</p>	<p>-Young people have equal opportunities for meaningful action and influence</p> <p>-Power holders have increased awareness of the value & mechanisms for youth political inclusion</p>	<p>Young people are more likely to participate constructively in politics, and power holders are more likely to create opportunities and space for youth political engagement</p>
<p>If young people have knowledge, skills, demeanor/attitude (self efficacy, confidence), space/opportunity (legally, supported by political leaders and adults, safe space), and motivation to do so, and they find success in initial political efforts, they will become and maintain politically engaged</p>	<p>-Youth have political knowledge and skills</p> <p>-Youth have a positive demeanor/attitude toward politics</p> <p>-Youth have support and space to participate</p> <p>-Youth have motivation to participate</p> <p>-Youth find success in initial political efforts</p>	<p>Youth will become and remain politically engaged</p>

Although the goals of these programs are similar, their respective theories of change address a variety of different elements and variables in order to reach those objectives, as shown in column two. Most of these elements relate to PYD principles, as presented by USAID during the workshop. The table below lists out each of these program elements, with similar and corresponding PYD principles to the right.

ToC Elements Identified	PYD Principles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political skills Knowledge of democratic concepts and principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe Space

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political/cultural space for youth activism • Legal or political mechanisms for youth political participation • Guidance in seizing opportunity 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from peer networks, families, and mentors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy relationships & bonding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness among power holders of the value of youth political participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging and membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive demeanor/attitude (self efficacy, confidence, sense of personal/civic responsibility) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive norms, expectations and perceptions
Non-Corresponding Elements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth are motivated to address an issue • Success in initial political efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth engagement & contribution • Access to age services/integration among services

These elements and principles may provide a wider view of what needs to be considered to support and sustain constructive youth political participation. The above table illustrates how PYD principles could be adapted for programs specifically targeting youth political development. They may not all be appropriate or equally important for all youth programs, but considering the needs and opportunities in these areas may help shed light on what is holding young people back from participating politically in a given context, and what elements need to be addressed to break down those barriers.

As illustrated in the bottom row of the table, there are a few elements identified in each column that do not match up, including , , and .

Based on discussions during the workshop, these are critical considerations. For example, NDI has seen in its work that people are more likely to become and remain involved in politics when they are motivated by an issue or cause that they care about. Success in initial political efforts may also feed sustained motivation, as it supports the perception that politics are a worthwhile means for addressing issues. This may suggest that the local level is a good starting point for youth participation, as it is often more difficult to attain short-term change at the national level.

may also be important and applicable for all youth programs. Involving young people in a leadership capacity at all stages of program design, planning and implementation helps ensure that programs are addressing young people's actual needs, creates a sense of personal responsibility among youth involved, and can contribute to motivation.

speaks to the need to take a holistic approach. Democracy and governance practitioners should explore how factors beyond the individual and the political context affect youth political participation.

Critical Assumptions and Considerations

The workshop produced a long list of critical assumptions often featured in theories of change for youth political participation programs. More attention should be paid to unpacking these assumptions in program design, so that programs are not based on unrealistic expectations. At times, some assumption might not be true. Some assumptions that have turned out to be false include:

- Greater political knowledge and skills alone will lead to greater, sustained and constructive youth political participation
- Power holders are interested in including youth and sharing decision-making power
- Young people are more democratic than older generations, and will remain democratic even within an undemocratic system
- Societies and cultures readily change to involve youth as leaders
- Self-reported change in program evaluation surveys is true, reliable and indicative of actual change
- Knowledge and opportunity will motivate youth and parties to be more inclusive and democratic
- Leadership program graduates will have natural avenues to exercise their leadership skills.

Below is an outline of reflection questions that may help implementers design more informed theories of change.

- Self-Assessment/Reflection
 - How is your organization perceived by local young people? By local power holders/authorities? By other citizens?
 - Consider "Western" affiliation, the target country's history, and previous work done by international organizations in-country
 - What are your biases about the target context?
 - How could your involvement risk harm or perpetuating barriers to youth participation?
- Assessment of local context - be forthcoming about uncertainties

- Cultural dynamics
 - How are youth culturally perceived in the target country/community?
 - What is the current level of youth leadership? How do young people engage around issues that affect them?
 - What risks could young people incur by raising their profiles as leaders and challenging existing power structures?
 - What motivates young people in the target context? What do different youth care about?
 - How are youth perceived differently based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics?
 - What do you know about the position of youth within the cultural context?
- Political dynamics
 - How are youth involved in politics in the target country?
 - How are youth included in political leadership? What, if any, efforts are government and power holders making to better include young people in political decisionmaking?
 - How is “meaningful” youth political participation defined or understood by young people? By power holders?
 - What national policies, laws or constitutional provisions exist that affect youth leadership and political participation?
 - Has the target country signed onto any of the following international treaties or agreements?
 - UNSC 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (2015)
 - Inter-Parliamentary Union Resolution on Youth Participation in the Democratic Process (2010)
 - Are common “western” political skills and practices applicable in the local context?
 - How do political factors for youth vary based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics?
 - What do you know about how young people are involved in politics locally?
- Which youth?
 - Considering the questions above, which youth are you planning to work with? Why? What is their experience and capacity level regarding political participation?
 - What issues are important to the youth you plan to engage?
 - What support structures exist for the youth you plan to assist? Consider family, education, employment, psychological and other community support needs and mechanisms.

- What other political barriers or opportunities exist for the young people you plan to assist? Consider personal characteristics and diversity including gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and geography (urban/rural) and how they affect the position of the youth you plan to engage.
- Risk
 - Based on the current level of inclusion and political opportunities for young people in the target context, what risks could result from your proposed work?
 - If there is not currently ample political space for young people to affect politics, is there a risk of perpetuating frustration and disengagement? Consider how the program can be designed to mitigate these risks.
 - Given the current political environment, could youth risk becoming a target for violence or other backlash if they heighten their visibility?
- Sustainability
 - Do the young people you plan to involve have access to resources and structures (organizations) to sustain their work beyond the end of your program?
 - How can the program be designed to maximize opportunities for continued political engagement? Consider young people's motivations for continuing their work.

During discussion, questions arose about the implications of working with large numbers of youth or concentrating on a smaller number.

- Concentrating assistance on smaller groups of individuals who have demonstrated experience and commitment to a political cause may increase the likelihood that participants will make best use of the assistance provided and continue their political efforts in the long term;
- Focusing resources on the most active and well-connected youth may perpetuate exclusion of marginalized communities, including women, youth with disabilities, LGBTI youth, youth in rural areas, or youth from poor socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Involving a larger number of people could expand program impact if all participants move on to apply new skills and capacities in a positive way;
- Implementers may have weaker relationships with individual participants in large programs, and therefore less familiarity with their experience or potential to best utilize the assistance provided.

Conflict-Affected Environments/Countering Violent Extremism

There was also limited discussion regarding special considerations for youth political participation programs in contexts that are currently experiencing or recovering from violent conflict. Young people are disproportionately affected by the negative consequences of conflict, including political violence, criminal gangs and organized crime, which bear enormous and long-lasting human, social and economic costs. Young men between the ages of 15 and 29 account for the majority of casualties of lethal armed violence, and young women and young men are at heightened risk of physical and sexual abuse and exploitation.

Given the potential for idle, frustrated youth to be recruited by violent extremist organizations, there is an increasing focus within the international development field on how to support positive development of young people in environments currently experiencing or recovering from conflict. Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) is one approach that is being widely embraced, although there is limited understanding about what actually works. Youth development experts, however, have made efforts in recent years to shift the conversation from viewing youth as a problem that needs to be fixed, to engaging young people as leaders in peacebuilding.

Many donors and organizations have invested in civic engagement and peace messaging programs as a means to prevent young people from joining extremist or insurgent groups. There is no evidence, however, that these types of programs are effective. Civic engagement programs are unlikely to promote constructive youth political participation where there are not inclusive government structures that will meaningfully respond to citizens' needs. In fact, if increased civic skills and engagement are not met by meaningful, positive government reforms, this can perpetuate youth frustration and disengagement. A study conducted by RAND Corporation in the West Bank found that young people who are politically engaged are more likely to participate in political violence. Peace messaging is also ineffective, likely because financial and other incentives offered by violent groups are often more influential than verbal appeals to avoid violence.

When planning a CVE program it is important to identify locally nuanced drivers to conflict and assess the political environment to determine whether political engagement may be an effective approach. In conflict settings, Mercy Corps and other organizations have found that it is particularly important to take a holistic development approach for youth, including psychosocial support for youth affected by violence. More research is needed to understand how and when political participation can be integrated into efforts to foster peace and reconciliation.

CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS

This workshop provided an informative and interactive opportunity to discuss strategies for supporting youth political participation and how to improve them. It

confirmed that there is a dearth of evidence about what approaches work to support informed, constructive, impactful and sustained youth political participation. Program approaches that have proven effective in developing young people's skills and confidence are important, but further study is needed to understand how these efforts contribute to inclusion and democratization. This signals the need for more intentional evidence gathering about what works in youth political participation programs.

The workshop also demonstrated the depth of knowledge and experience that exists among practitioners working with youth, which may be able to inform ways to strengthen work in this field. Collective examination of theories of change for youth political participation programs highlighted a range of variables and elements that may affect youth participation in different contexts. Program implementers can consider these variables when designing, implementing and evaluating future programs to gain a better understanding of what factors may need to be addressed in different contexts to implement better youth political participation programs. The workshop also contributed a long list of assumptions that programs make, which may be critical to improving future efforts. Scrutinizing these assumptions and gathering more information about their accuracy may enable development of more evidence-based theories of change, and ultimately, better programs.

The key outcomes of the workshop point to the need to step back and think more broadly about youth political participation, including how current youth political participation patterns relate to how they tend to be engaged by political systems. Within political parties, government and legislatures, the most common avenues for young people to get involved are dedicated bodies for youth. Such institutions include political party youth wings, youth government advisory councils, youth parliaments, legislative quotas for youth, and parliamentary youth caucuses and committees. While these institutions are meant to involve and include young people, they can also further isolate and exclude them. There is little evidence regarding the benefits of these bodies when it comes to young people having influence over decisions, and representatives of such organizations often complain that their input is not taken seriously by more senior leaders. Further, members of these bodies tend to be elite young men. These efforts are a tokenistic way of including youth, which is meant to provide the aesthetic of inclusivity. This not only perpetuates youth frustration, but isolating them limits their opportunities to engage with and learn from senior, more experienced leaders. Patterns of youth political participation may need to change for them to be better able to affect and transform systems.

This may also provide an important lesson for youth political participation programs; programs that solely involve youth may have a similar effect as political institutions that isolate youth leaders. Where possible, implementers should consider ways to involve both young people and senior leaders in an equal way to promote collaboration rather than youth tokenism and isolation. Placing young people in a situation where they can learn alongside leaders of systems that exclude them, but

also directly challenge negative stereotypes, may be important for transforming cultural and political narratives related to youth political participation.

Below are some other key takeaways from the workshop:

- Theories of change provide a useful tool for exploring general approaches for supporting youth political participation programs, but are more effective at the project level when they reflect a specific objectives and contextual information. Many common challenges and issues that affect young people can be drawn across various contexts, but theories of change always need to be reconsidered and adapted to the local context.
- Programs need to be clear about which youth they are supporting. Youth face a diverse array of challenges, opportunities, interests and needs based on personal differences such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, geographic location (urban/rural), and other factors. There is some evidence that young people may be more inclusive and welcoming of different groups than older generations. Designing programs that recognize and address barriers faced by different young people and assist diverse youth may be critical for encourage collective youth political action on issues that affect them.
- Programs may need to consider a wider range of influences on a young person's life beyond purely political barriers. Young people's capacity, skills and experience, as well as the opportunities and willingness for increased youth participation that exist among power holders, are common and important elements that programs seek to address. Deconstructing more developed and thoughtful theories of change reveals several other factors that may be important for youth political participation programs, including cultural perceptions toward youth, young people's cultural perceptions of themselves and their environment, family and community support, psychological development stages, motivation to engage politically, and youth involvement in programs affecting them.

The workshop also highlighted a variety of questions for democracy and governance practitioners to explore in order to improve knowledge and evidence about the effectiveness of youth programs. Below are the key questions drawn out during workshop discussions.

- What types of skills help youth engage politically?
- What motivates youth to participate in politics and remain engaged, despite setbacks?
- How do socio-cultural norms affect youth political participation programs?
- How do we better design programs with the intent to collect evidence about impact and the relative effectiveness of different approaches?
- When is it best to support youth participation as an end, or to engage youth as political changemakers in the short-term?

- Is assistance for youth political engagement at the local/micro level useful when there is not political space at the macro/higher level?
- Where can young people most often identify meaningful opportunities to engage politically and affect decisions and change - within informal community groups, civil society organizations, political parties or publicly elected positions?
- Many programs involving both women and young people achieve greater success in advancing women's leadership. What does this say about the attitudinal, institutional and other barriers facing women? What does this mean for young women?
- What is the actual effect of political party youth wings and other youth-focused institutions on youth political participation?

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5. RAND Corporation, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1118.html, 2015,
6. United Nations, Security Council Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250, Urges Member States to Increase Representation of Youth in Decision-Making at All Levels, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

Recommended Resources for Further Exploration

- Oxfam Australia, [Youth Participation and Leadership Theory of Change Resource](#), April 2015
- Restless Development, [Nurturing Youth Leadership in the Global South: A Mapping of Strategies, Approaches, Challenges and Opportunities](#), 2016.
- Search for Common Ground, [UNSCR 2250: A Toolkit for Youth](#), April 2016
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [UN World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement](#), July 2016
- Youth Power Learning, <http://www.youthpower.org/>