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Georgia Civic Education Initiative

Background

Georgia has been striding toward full democracy since the peaceful Rose Revolution of 2003, but substantial challenges remain. According to the 2017 Caucasus Barometer, although a majority of Georgians believe that democracy is preferable to any other form of government, 44 percent believe that the country is “a democracy but with major problems.” That survey also shows that a plurality of Georgians neither trusts nor distrusts major government institutions, and that a large share of the population still struggles to tolerate ethnic and other types of diversity.

Empowering citizens and creating a strong demand for democracy can help further institutionalize democracy in Georgia. The U.S. Agency for International Development Mission in Georgia (USAID/Georgia) sought to contribute to this process through the Momavlis Taoba (MT) Civic Education Initiative, a five-year project (2014-2019) implemented by PH International in close coordination with the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science (MOES). By expanding and institutionalizing secondary school civics education curricula and practical applications, MT aims to foster greater civic engagement of young people and enhance civil society’s role in promoting transparent and accountable governance at the national and local levels.

The USAID Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, together with USAID/Georgia, PH International, and the MOES, designed and implemented an impact evaluation (IE) of the MT initiative. Specifically, the IE gauges the effectiveness of three civic education approaches in improving in-school experiences and outcomes, and in promoting democratic and prosocial attitudes and behaviors outside school.

The MT Civic Education Initiative

The MT initiative was designed to improve the quality and scope of civic education in public schools to influence the attitudes and behaviors

of youth and encourage them to participate actively in Georgia’s democratic society. PH International designed and implemented three interventions in 9th- and 10th-grade classrooms in participating schools:

- *Variation 1 (V1)*: enhanced teacher training and supplementary civics curricula
- *Variation 2 (V2)*: V1 + voluntary civic clubs
- *Variation 3 (V3)*: V1 + mandatory class civic projects

These three variations represent three different approaches to delivering civic education: traditional classroom instruction; traditional classroom instruction plus voluntary experiential learning; and traditional classroom instruction plus compulsory experiential learning.

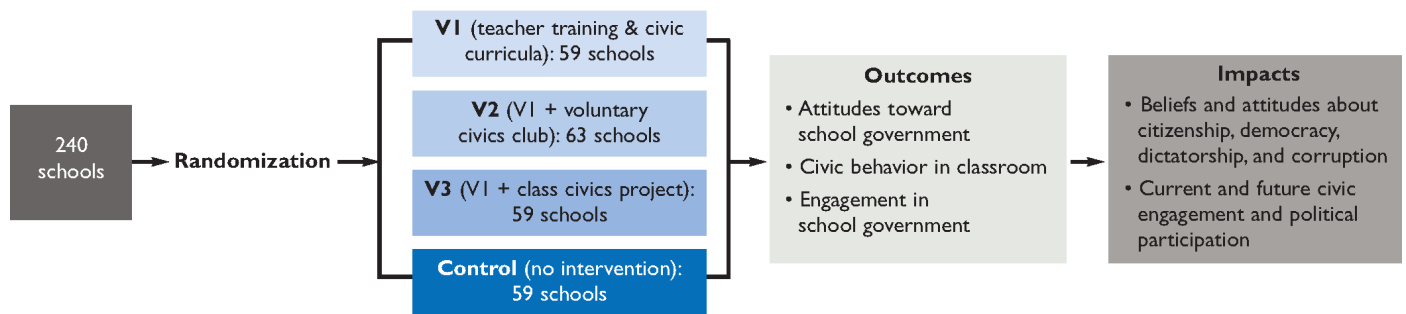
Design

School districts were randomly assigned to receive one of the three variations (V1, V2 or V3) or no programming (control). All schools in a given district were assigned to the same group to reduce spillover effects that could arise if students from schools assigned to different groups shared their knowledge from class with each other.

In total, 240 secondary schools were part of the IE (see figure overleaf). Students from 9th and 10th grade were surveyed in each of three rounds of data collection:

- *Round 1*, spring of 2016, captured endline data for Year 1 (Y1, academic year 2015/16).
- *Round 2*, fall of 2016, captured baseline data for Year 2 (Y2, academic year 2016/17).
- *Round 3*, spring of 2017, captured endline data for Y2.

Note that students who were enrolled in 9th grade during Y1 received a second year of MT programming in Y2, when they were enrolled in 10th grade. All other students received a single year of MT programming.



Evaluation Questions

- Does civic education programming improve students’ civic, democratic and prosocial attitudes and behaviors? What is the relative effectiveness of the three civic education variations?
- Does civic education programming contribute to reducing gaps in desirable civic, democratic and prosocial attitudes and behaviors between students of different genders, ethnoreligious groups, and socioeconomic status?
- Do two years of civic-education programming produce greater effects than one year of programming?
- Does civic education programming have similar effects on 9th graders and 10th graders?

Outcomes and Impacts

The IE examined two types of effects: outcomes and impacts. Outcomes are immediate or short-term effects that are expected to occur as a direct result of programming. Impacts are higher-level effects that are expected to occur in the medium to long terms.

- *Outcomes*: attitudes toward school government and politics; civic behaviors and teachings in the classroom; and engagement in school government and politics
- *Attitudinal impacts*: democratic and prosocial attitudes; attitudes toward corruption and dictatorship; internal political efficacy (belief that one understands and can participate in politics) and beliefs about citizenship; and external political efficacy (belief that one can influence political affairs)
- *Behavioral impacts*: current civic engagement and practices; and future civic engagement and political participation

Findings

- MT programming had a relatively successful uptake of experiential learning activities. Surprisingly, students in V1 schools participated in civic projects at similar rates as those in V2 schools. Students in

V3 schools had the highest rates of participation in civic projects.

- MT programming had a significant effect on outcome measures. Regardless of variation, when compared to the control group, students in MT schools were more likely to express their opinions, learn about social problems, discuss current events, have positive views about participation in school politics, and believe that positive changes can happen in schools when students mobilize.
- MT programming had mixed results on impact measures. On one hand, it had no discernable impact on students’ civic, democratic and prosocial attitudes. On the other hand, all three MT variations, especially V2 and V3, had a positive impact on current civic engagement and practices. However, this may reflect uptake of experiential learning projects; analyses cannot differentiate between engagement and practices that happened within these projects from those that happened independently.
- Girls fare better than boys on civic, democratic and prosocial attitudes and behaviors, as indicated by findings from control schools. MT programming had a stronger effect on uptake of experiential learning activities and current civic engagement and practices among girls, increasing the gap between genders.
- MT programming did not help reduce gaps between students from ethnoreligious minorities and other students, and between students from households with low socioeconomic status and other students.
- Two years of exposure to MT programming had similar effects to one year of exposure.
- MT programming had similar effects on 9th graders and 10th graders.

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