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SPECIAL REPORT

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Civic Education and Peacebuilding

Examples from Iraq and Sudan

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Contents

Summary

- Civic education provides a positive framework for collective civic identity. As such, it can be a stabilizing factor in societies suffering from violent conflict and its aftermath.
- The emphasis of civic education on public participation in governance overlaps with human rights, but the two fields have distinct and separate conceptual bases.
- Postconflict environments create several severe challenges for educators. Some of these challenges are particularly difficult for civic education programs and must be addressed as such programs are developed.
- Classroom techniques are a crucial part of civic education because they impart skills as well as knowledge; both are necessary features of successful civic participation.
- USIP experiences with civic education programming in Iraq and Sudan illustrate the challenges and rewards of developing effective, sustainable models of civic education in areas recovering from violence. Such programs require local engagement, flexibility, patience, and long-term commitment.

In both theory and practice, citizenship and civic rights are important components of civic education, particularly in building peaceful national institutions in areas affected by violent conflict. Though there are differences between human and civic rights, educators in these two complementary fields have similar goals, such as employing interactive classroom techniques, and face similar challenges, such as dealing with specific problems that arise from conflict. The cases of civic education programming in Iraq and Sudan illustrate how differently civic education can manifest in different conflict contexts and what types of challenges can occur in developing effective programs.

Civic Education as a Channel to Citizenship and Peaceful Nation Building

Citizenship in many ways is the linchpin to turning a society away from violent conflict and toward creating productive political relationships, through which disagreements can be negotiated nonviolently. The importance of citizenship for peacebuilding is tied to the idea of developing the state as an object of primary loyalty, so that citizens of a state are motivated to seek the common good of society and possibly be willing to make sacrifices for other citizens. This aspect of citizenship makes it a valuable peacebuilding concept. Both state building (i.e., creating effective governance institutions) and nation building (i.e., fostering an identity of members of a common social group) are needed for peacebuilding success.

Participation in governance is a measure of good citizenship, but some types of citizen participation actually contribute to social conflict. When the balance between disagreement and disengagement fails to be struck, groups may address themselves rather than engaging each other, resulting in increasingly negative stereotypes and hardened social lines, even while such speech is conducted publicly as part of political participation. Creating a responsible citizenry in the wake of violent social conflict must be an exercise in conflict transformation, involving developing the skills to continue political disagreements indefinitely without giving up efforts to resolve or ameliorate them—or resorting to violence.[1] Civic education seeks to give citizens the understanding and the habit of engaging in such a nonviolent contest to participate constructively in politics and, more broadly, civic life and service to the community. Such education, then, can help stabilize societies affected by violence and should be seen as an important positive feature of a postconflict landscape.

What Are Civic Rights?

The term *civic rights* is used to highlight their intersection and interaction with human rights. Human and civic rights sometimes overlap and should strongly complement one another, but they have different foundations. Human rights are based on universal standards, as codified in the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Civic rights and responsibilities are different: They are the theoretical foundations of participation in the public life of a state—and therefore, of fully developed citizenship[2]—and can be grouped into negative civic rights, positive civic rights, and civic responsibilities.

Negative civic rights limit the ways in which anyone, especially the government, may interfere with individual activity; such rights include the freedoms of speech and association. Civic rights overlap with human rights in the negative rights that both frameworks endorse: Both human and civic rights maintain that certain individual activities must not be limited. Human rights education is concerned with the basic dignity of human beings and draws on universalism and international conventions, while civic education focuses on participation in a public sphere particular to the state and the citizens concerned.

Citizenship necessarily involves positive rights, providing opportunities for individuals to take part in their community's decisions, such as through a participatory political system or transparent government. Other possible positive rights may include the right to an education, so that one has the intellectual capacity and skill to engage with the political system. The details of civic rights are particular to each state, and knowledge of the particulars of one's own political system informs the content of civic education. But in conflict or postconflict situations, the very nature of the state, its citizens, or the system are often in flux.

Civic responsibilities include being informed about major issues and the political system itself to facilitate participation in communal politics. Educators clearly help citizens fulfill this major obligation. Broad concepts such as citizenship are important to impart, and effec-

tive participation demands that citizens not only be inspired by ideals, but also know the specifics of how their own system works. This requires practical skills for public organizing and debate.

The Distinction between Human and Civic Rights

As mentioned above, human and civic rights have significantly different theoretical bases. Human rights are often associated with individualism, but they also underlie cultures or societies. The core value of both individual human rights and group rights is the intrinsic and universal value of the human being.[3] Civic rights start from a different point: They are designed to empower citizens in the public sphere and are therefore particular to the polity at hand. The core value of civic rights is the value of citizens' participation in political life.

The distinction between human and civic rights is important for three reasons. First, an educator who understands the theoretical bases of the rights she is promoting better engages with the ideas that students bring to the classroom. Second, recognizing that civic rights are born of a concern with participation in the polity highlights the importance of participatory learning for civic education. As a result, models of education that focus exclusively on transmitting information from teacher to student will be inadequate for civic education. Finally, the connection of civic education with nation building—particularly with citizen effectiveness in influencing the government as well as participation in civic life and civil society—may generate resistance to civic education programming similar to opposition to human rights education. On the other hand, opposition to one can translate into acceptance of the other. An authoritarian regime that has had trouble with human rights violations may be more receptive to civic education, which does not focus on international legal standards and culpability, while a nation that has defensive and separate sectarian communities may resist the call of civic education to focus on the unity of the nation. Understanding the different bases of these two rights frameworks can provide strategic depth to peacebuilding programming in sensitive circumstances.

Classroom Technique

Civic skills are best inculcated through specific classroom technique; one should no more expect students to become good at the skills of citizenship merely by being told about them than one would expect someone to become a good football player merely by reading books about football. Research on civic education indicates that, while traditional lecture-based teaching can effectively impart civic knowledge, active classroom techniques such as discussion and roleplay are much more effective at changing student views and motivations.[4] Classes centered on the instructor risk being counterproductive, since students in such environments place a great deal of weight on their teachers' personal characteristics. If instructors are perceived as unlikable, students may come away from civic education with a more negative view of civic rights and responsibilities.[5]

Educators cannot hope to impart civic skills effectively in students alone, especially with what is likely to be only a small portion of the school day. But some classroom techniques allow the educator to model good citizenship skills and students to practice them. Educators can model civic virtue, when appropriate, by engaging with students as equals in the classroom, so that the classes are a collaborative project bringing the students to a better understanding of and commitment to civic participation. Just as important, teachers can model in microcosm some of the balance between authority and citizen input that is crucial to a participatory political system. Sometimes dissent and disagreement are conflated with resistance to

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legitimate authority. An educator who accepts input and is willing to engage with students' disagreements and questions, while still maintaining classroom discipline and fairly arbitrating disputes, can help show how authority can coexist with meaningful participation.

Students also need room to practice the skills of citizenship, articulating their views clearly and persuasively, respectfully engaging with the views of others, working together with their fellow citizens toward a common good and accepting those with whom they disagree. In the classroom, a number of techniques, familiar from student-centered learning approaches, are also useful for modeling participatory governance structures and giving students practice in skills helpful for citizenship. Small group discussions and small group work, where possible and safe, can be most effective if students from opposed ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or other groups are placed together. Such groups can build mutual respect, working together for a common benefit and group bonding. Classroom discussions, led by both teachers and students, develop the abilities to present ideas and engage with those of others, educate oneself about issues, and demonstrate respect for the contributions of all. Student-led discussions can be especially valuable to show that all students, and not only the teacher or certain students, have valuable things to contribute to the learning environment. Role-playing exercises, especially those that ask students to take on roles very different from their own, encourage mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation for the way that commonalities and differences can coexist among citizens.

The classroom is a social space as well as an intellectual one. Age-appropriate activities, such as celebrations of holidays, sports, or meals to which students all contribute, can help build friendships among students. The best argument for why students might wish to engage peacefully with their fellow citizens, even across conflict fault lines, is that life seems more enjoyable that way.

One point of classroom group work is that building citizenship in the wake of conflict requires students to confront each other across problematic social divides inflamed by histories of violence. The classroom is a good environment for such encounters because it can be a controlled, safe space for working with others, and concrete projects and direction can focus on such encounters. Working with a student from another ethnic group on a graded project may change attitudes more than working with someone because a student is told that it is a good idea for its own sake.[6]

Service Learning

In service learning, students take projects out of the classroom to work within their communities. Though used in many educational contexts, service-learning projects carry several potential benefits for civic education. First, students can see an immediate benefit from their work, though care should be taken to monitor progress and both evaluate and celebrate that benefit. The sheer difference in activity involved in getting out of the classroom may also help engage students with their civic studies. Second, the general focus of service learning on the local community may foster a broad vision of citizenship and the common good, breaking down social barriers between students and the poor or marginalized. Third, the specific skills needed to maneuver in the political system are difficult to build in the classroom alone; working to improve the local situation gives students opportunities for contact with the level of government that is likely to be the most accessible to them and that most affects their daily lives.

Implementing a good-service learning project can be a large undertaking, however, and educators should be sure that they are creating something their students will get the most out of. A full discussion of service-learning program design is well beyond the scope of this report, but there are several general ideas to keep in mind.[7] First, service learning

The general focus of service learning on the local community may foster a broad vision of citizenship and the common good.

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projects are most effective when combined with other classroom-based techniques, such as writing reflections or research papers based on student experiences, class discussions, or presentations. Second, service-learning projects should provide sustained rather than episodic connections with issues and communities, bringing students into contact with the community beyond the school, rather than focusing only on work within the school where possible. These projects may not be feasible in many postconflict or peacebuilding situations, but educators should look for even small opportunities, such as planting a small community garden near the school, tutoring younger children, or picking up trash around the school. Finally, service-learning programs should be aligned with student preferences, both for issues to work on and the type of work, and students should be given a voice in the design of programs. That said, the project should also benefit the community, and be constructed with input from the community it intends to help. Students should be aware of the complexities of working with other groups, as navigating them is itself a civic skill.

Postconflict Challenges

Postconflict or peacebuilding environments often lack basic security, which severely challenges educators and students throughout the education process. However, other issues arise in a conflict context for civic education that it may not face in other situations, or may face less severely.

Lack of Instructor Familiarity with Active, Student-Centered Teaching Methods

In many postconflict environments, student-centered teaching techniques are not widely practiced or understood. This applies to more complex approaches, such as service learning, but also to techniques that many Western educators take for granted, such as class discussion. The reasons for this situation are varied; among them is that teachers in conflict areas often have been isolated from the international community of educators where such techniques have seen greater use over the past several decades—many educators who have had contact with the international community use those contacts to leave conflict areas—and many conflicts occur within authoritarian regimes that have not encouraged critical thinking or open and frank discussion in their educational systems. It is not enough simply to impress upon local educators the value of such approaches; skills at facilitating discussions are honed over years of teaching experience, and even very enthusiastic teachers will need to practice them. In addition, where such techniques are unusual or new, educators may not receive support from administrators or even parents. It is important to watch for difficulties that local educators encounter and to provide support not just in building teachers' skills, but in working with the politics of their educational institutions.

Conversely, outside educators should not arrive with a fixed idea of how things should be done and impose it on local educators. The recommendations in this report should be taken as the starting point for a conversation with local educators. If local teachers believe that certain techniques will help, outsiders should give support, and there is nothing wrong with explaining the utility of some approaches. But local educators also have their own skills and insights that apply to the situation at hand. Discussion of technique and approach should always be a two-way process.

Centralized Control of Education

U.S. educators, especially those coming from higher education, are generally accustomed to a very high degree of freedom in their classrooms. This is not the case in many other countries, especially in nations emerging from conflict, many of which have a legacy of

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authoritarian control that extends to education. In a postconflict education environment, instructors with whom outside teachers are working cannot implement changes in the classrooms on their own authority. Approval may be required from a ministry of (higher) education or equivalent agency for all but the most minor curriculum changes. This requirement is often especially acute at the primary and secondary levels but poses challenges at the postsecondary level as well. When the possibility of implementing a version of the USIP rights of the citizen curriculum (discussed below) was raised with a political-science professor from a university in the Kurdistan Regional Government area of Iraq, the professor replied that the Ministry of Higher Education required her to adhere to a centrally determined syllabus for her class; she could determine only about 10 percent of the material covered in the class herself. In addition, impoverished or nonexistent teacher training programs can leave teaching skills and pedagogy often sadly underdeveloped. Societies recovering from violent conflict also fall behind in access to texts and content knowledge. These challenges are more exaggerated in rural and poor areas.

As the Kurdistan example suggests, under centralized control, if civic education is not currently part of the curriculum, adding it can be difficult; if an existing civic education program does not meet the needs of postconflict peacebuilding, it may be difficult to change. The most straightforward way to address problems of centralized control is to work with the center, as a civic education program can be developed in consultation with the relevant government agencies. This may not always be an option, however: Educators may not be well placed to contact the relevant government actors, or there may be bureaucratic inertia or outright hostility from government actors (for more on this, see below).

Where direct work with the government is not an option, the civic education program can recruit allies among instructors. Several strategies are available, but they should be carefully evaluated not only for their likelihood of success, but also for the possibility of backlash against local instructors or the institution sponsoring the initiative.

Work Outside Normal Class Times

Instructors may be willing to deliver civic education material outside of normal class times. Typically, this would be during scheduled breaks in the school day, or after school hours. More dramatically, instruction could take place informally, outside school. Such an approach would involve lack of access to school buildings and other instructional materials, but might be accessible to a community beyond the formal student population.

The approach is easiest if it is possible to secure the buy-in of school administrators and parents. Administrators who will allow the use of school facilities for extracurricular instruction are helpful, if not crucial. And particularly if instruction is to take place before or after normal school hours, parents need to approve. In postconflict areas, even parents who like the idea of civic education may be concerned about their children's safety if working with the program requires them to travel in smaller groups, later than normal hours (especially after dark), or by different routes. Educators should be sensitive to, and prepare to address, these reasonable fears.

Insert Civic Education Materials into Existing Classes

In some cases, it may be possible to address civic topics in existing classes, such as history or political science. Instructors could use civic education topics as bases for class discussion of mandated topics. For instance, a national history class might be able to include significant discussion of the development of the nation's political structures. It may even be possible to insert some degree of civic education into classes that do not seem to be a natural fit. One of the authors was told by an Iraqi educator that, under Saddam Hussein, word problems

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in math classes would often include elements of indoctrination, such as asking students to calculate how many Iranian planes Iraqi soldiers could shoot down in a specified period of time. Such techniques can be turned on their heads for civic education purposes.

A different approach would be to import student-centered teaching techniques into existing classes, as teaching methods are often subject to less control than content. This approach would not help to increase civic knowledge among students, but it might foster civic skills, such as openness to other perspectives and ability to work with others for a common good.[8]

Mistrust of Civic Education

Civic education's nation-building aspect can have a darker side. Building a sense of national identity can consolidate support for an oppressive regime. It can also foster exclusion to some extent, even in the most benign cases. In a national context, a certain amount of national or even ethnonational pride may be benign, but nation-building procedures can foment militarism against other nations or define one ethnic or cultural group as the real nationals, licensing discrimination or violence against another group.[9]

As many internal conflicts arise in authoritarian regimes, where there is an existing legacy of civic education, that legacy is likely to be problematic. Civic education or related curricula may have served previously as programs of indoctrination for the regime. Parents, instructors, and students may fear that any new civic education program has a similar purpose and resist participation in it. These concerns may be aggravated if the educators are associated with a conflict intervention or international actor that the target population does not fully respect, or that is associated with a military force. There is no easy way to address this concern, though likely, it is best for educators to work with local partners to develop curricula, and to be open and honest with parents, students, and other stakeholders in the target population.

Resistance to Civic Education

Individuals who live in well-established democracies may be inclined to see democracy as neutral, that is, a way of ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to influence the political process without favoring any one group. This is often not the perception in postconflict areas, especially where one societal group has a large numerical advantage that would correspond to greater power in a democratic system.

Likewise, though civic education may sound beneficial, it also means giving students better information about how to use government structures to their advantage. People who understand how government works are better able to pursue their interests through the political system. Lobbyists and professional advocacy groups can leverage their greater understanding and access into lucrative businesses and contacts, further demonstrating the power of deep knowledge about the workings of government. When these skills enable weaker groups to challenge the power of entrenched elites, and possibly vice versa, resistance can be expected.

Fostering civic skills may also threaten those with power, for two reasons. First, to the extent that powerful groups use societal divisions to foster their own power, as is the case in many ethnicized conflicts, civic education that encourages mutual respect and equal regard for all citizens may tend to undermine this. Second, civic skills are important for citizens precisely because they facilitate civic action, making citizens better able to organize and more willing to work for social goods. This means that civic education, if successful, tends to strengthen citizens to create new groups that can exercise political power, and these will likely oppose existing loci of power, often but not always more narrowly focused.

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Educators should be prepared not only for the difficulties of working with a national education bureaucracy and creating compelling educational materials, but for the possibility of outright hostility from some agents. This is particularly a problem where factional groups have managed to capture relevant government ministries, which may be very antagonistic to the idea of a civic education program that encourages students to work with a perceived enemy and may not possess the civic understanding to restrain the use of their positions to advance their agendas.

Finally, the history of civic education programs counsels humility. Many of the nationalist and militaristic indoctrination programs that civic education interventions seek to correct were far from perfect instruments for their regimes. In Iraq between World War I and World War II, education aimed at fostering an Arab-nationalist identity instead spurred an interest in and glorification of Bedouin culture, and some educators who wanted to emphasize their place in a diverse Iraq subverted the government's educational goals.[10] Those involved in postconflict civic education who overcome logistical and political difficulties should be prepared for students and teachers to be active agents, taking projects in unexpected directions.

Experiences and Lessons Learned

From 2006 to 2010, USIP engaged in a number of civic education–oriented programs in both Iraq and Sudan. All were undertaken at the level of higher education or civil society actors, such as journalists, non-governmental organization (NGO) activists, and political party staff, in part because higher education and civil society are less rigidly structured and more easily amenable to new training or curricula. They also are often important nodes for modeling social change and can give guidance and feedback on program developments. Another reason is that the Institute's limited resources require targeted approaches that may serve as pilots or models, which the appropriate domestic actors could sustain over time and perhaps promulgate.

Iraq: The Rights of the Citizen Curriculum

USIP began developing a rights of the citizen curriculum in 2006, to be delivered to secondary-school students in Baghdad. The project was a collaboration between USIP staff and several Iraqi educators in both the United States and Iraq. The project sought to help students understand the principles behind the new Iraqi state and constitution and build a sense of national community based on elements of Iraqi culture that would be familiar to students. Conversations in late 2006 and early 2007 developed several principles. First, concepts of civic and human rights should be rooted in the everyday experiences of students. Second, materials should be crafted to be attractive to students' parents, especially mothers, as many of the assignments were to be worked on at home, and USIP's Iraqi partners advised that students' mothers would likely have the most influence over what students spent time on there. Third, language should be developed to approach concepts of ethnicity obliquely, as they were not common in Iraqi discourse before the war. Fourth, the materials should include guidance for instructors to embed civic and human rights concepts broadly in their teaching, a response to concerns about resistance, as discussed above. The materials also should contain general guidance on student-centered pedagogical techniques for instructors, encompassing most of the techniques outlined above (except service learning). Fifth, incentives for students and teachers—such as small stipends for teachers or prizes for students—should be included in the implementation of the curriculum, so that already-burdened teachers were not asked to take on additional work with no compensation, and recognizing that students would likely not be motivated by civic virtue until after completing at least some of the program.

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The curriculum materials and teacher's guide (in Arabic) were completed in April 2007, at which point USIP began considering options for implementing them, in partnership with the University of Baghdad's Peace and Human Rights Education Unit (the Baghdad Unit), a group of educators at the university with a long-standing interest in rights education, a relationship with USIP, and approval for such work by the Ministry of Higher Education. Two focus groups of secondary-school teachers and administrators were carried out under the auspices of the Baghdad Unit and USIP Iraqi staff in 2007; the first discussed general goals and implementation and the second considered alternatives when it became clear that the Ministry of Education would not approve simply adding a rights of the citizen class as an official part of the curriculum. Several school administrators, however, were willing to allow teachers to teach the curriculum outside of normal class times.

Because scale of delivery was a problem, USIP and the Baghdad Unit decided to attempt a small pilot program involving ten teachers at ten schools teaching outside class hours. The goals of the pilot were limited: to see, first, whether it would be possible to teach the classes at all without undue interference; second, whether students would attend optional classes regularly; and third, whether the classes had any noticeable positive effect on students' attitudes about civic rights or toward their fellow nationals. To measure this, surveys were to be distributed to students before and after the pilot class. To support the class, booklets containing the curriculum and an Arabic translation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights were printed in Baghdad at USIP expense.

The pilot course was completed in May 2008, with generally positive results and feedback from teacher participants. However, detailed information on student response and effect was not reliably compiled. The end of the pilot was followed by an assessment period, with the aim of eventually rolling out a fuller course. USIP and the Baghdad Unit evaluated the curriculum and delivery model. Some concerns were raised about the quality of the physical booklets—largely an effect of cost constraints—as well as other issues, and in response to these concerns, USIP and the Baghdad Unit reviewed and rewrote the curriculum.

Simultaneously, USIP worked on building relationships with education officials from the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. In early 2009, USIP conducted a three-day problem-solving dialogue with Iraqi education leaders. During the dialogue, a number of educational priorities surfaced, including the development of civic education. A project was subsequently developed in cooperation with education officials to enhance the teaching of civic education through participatory development of a teacher's guide on teaching national and civic education for the fourth through ninth grades, the first draft of which is currently under review. Following revisions and approval, train-the-trainer programs are planned for 2011 and 2012.

The opportunity to enhance civic education, at the request of and in partnership with Iraqi government education officials, led USIP to shelve the rewrite of the rights of the citizen curriculum. While the partnership and process have met with challenges due to Iraq's political environment, USIP and Iraqi stakeholders involved have remained committed to it. Moreover, the potential for long-term sustainability and large-scale impact is much greater now than it would be, had USIP continued to work through unofficial channels with an unendorsed curriculum.

Iraq Lessons Learned

- *Quality of writing and presentation affect teachers' abilities to understand and implement a civic education program effectively.* Writing quality is especially important if, per USIP plans, the curriculum materials are ultimately intended for use by educators who have not been through a dedicated training session but are learning from the book. While USIP made and approved

in-house English translations, they were no substitute for having an independent reviewer fluent in the language and familiar with the local context assess the content; English-speaking USIP staff could not distinguish problems in the translation from problems in the text, and so a text with problematic writing initially was approved, though subsequently corrected.

- *Human and civic rights should be separate curricula.* The curriculum blended ideas from human and civic rights approaches in an attempt to present a nonspecialized, holistic picture of the kind of society Iraqis should aspire to. But the result was conceptually muddled and made it harder for teachers to clearly articulate important ideas, leaving the treatment of both civic and human rights relatively superficial, even for a secondary-school audience.

- *All partners need to have the same vision for assessment.* Clear assessment goals and procedures were developed only after discussions about implementation, and thus were not always well-understood or well supported by either educators in the pilot or some involved USIP staff; this resulted in shallow data collected for assessment.

- *Whenever possible, create opportunities to work directly with the host government education officials.* Although it can be time consuming and sensitive, working through official channels is the best way to ensure the project's long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

Sudan: Citizenship Skills and Preparing for the Elections

Voter Education Programs. USIP's involvement in civic education programs in Sudan began in the spring of 2006 with an assessment of the situation after the signing of the peace agreement. Sudan's bloody civil war had recently ended in a complex power- and wealth-sharing arrangement with a five-year transitional period before elections and a self-determination referendum for the south. The transitional framework required a commitment to democratic government and full-fledged elections in a country that had not seen free elections in twenty years. Knowledge of the details of this constitutional framework and of the rights and duties of democratic (voting) citizens was limited at best. Based on the assessment, USIP embarked first on a series of voter education and citizenship skills training workshops. At the recommendation of USIP's local implementing partner, these workshops were aimed at a mixed audience of college-level teachers, students, journalists, civil society activists, and political party members, with the strategy of spreading the understanding of civic rights and duties quickly and broadly through key sectors of Sudanese society.

The first workshop, on voter education, took place in September 2007 and was hosted by Al Ahfad University, a private university for women in Khartoum. The trainers included two democracy experts, one of whom had organized South Africa's first post-apartheid election. Participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of a democratic transformation in Sudan and the idea that substantive and peaceful elections would require understanding and participation from the general population. In one of the exercises, small groups were asked to design activities that would promote this understanding in their communities. The group tasked with designing a mock election decided to reinterpret their mandate creatively with an improvised set of theatrical vignettes; the group's leader was a well-known dramatist and theatre teacher at the host university.

The vignettes cleverly illustrated important lessons for citizens and voters as they thought about the upcoming elections. One scene included a political rally and the theme of the right to publicly voice support for various candidates. Another showed a rascally voter attempting to hide the ink on his finger and vote a second time. The scenes were funny and memorable and clearly had great power as peacebuilding and civic education tools. USIP decided to

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Participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of a democratic transformation in Sudan and the idea that substantive and peaceful elections would require understanding and participation from the general population.

commission the dramatist to write a voter education play to use in upcoming programs on citizenship skills. Once written, the play was performed live for several of USIP's workshops and always drew large and enthusiastic crowds, often including college students on their way to class who heard the projected voices of the actors and wanted to see the performance.

The play included issues of social responsibility and civic rights and skills as well as information about the process of voting. But it also skillfully reflected specifically Sudanese dialects, jokes, and customs. In one vignette, a local tribal elder, Nadir, comes home to his wife with packages of unusually fine gifts and cash. He has been visited by a powerful candidate who wants Nadir to sway the votes of the family. Nadir's wife, Attiat, and her friend, Samira, are appalled when they realize what has happened and they proclaim their dissent:

> *Attiat:* I have the right to vote for the candidate of my choice.
>
> *Hussein* (the candidate): Nadir, this woman is *nashiz* (slang for disobedient; this line often drew laughter).
>
> *Samira:* Shame on you, Nadir, you sell your principles for money?
>
> *Attiat:* You sell the good of your overall constituency for your own benefit?
>
> *Hussein:* Nadir, do not listen to the talk of the women.
>
> *Attiat:* The women brought you up and made you into a man.
>
> *Samira:* The new clothes will wear out and the money will be soon spent.
>
> *Attiat:* But your conscience will be awake and blaming you every day.
>
> *Hussein:* This is nonsense talk, empty words, and it will not feed you, or provide you with drinks or clothes.
>
> *Attiat:* Nadir, you have been honest and pure your whole life. You have always upheld your Sudanese values and principles.
>
> *Samira:* And today you want to sell your vote?
>
> *Attiat:* This Hussein, he will not see you again after winning. Or ask about you.
>
> *Samira:* Believe me, Nadir, deep inside Hussein disrespects you, because you sold your right.[11]

This excerpt, and the play in general, open a powerful avenue for thought and discussion on the nature of civic rights and responsibilities and their role in transforming a society. Although the play was recorded during a live performance, the emotions, humor, and thoughtfulness of the live actors are always more effective than the video.

Civic Education Conference

From the first few voter education and citizenship workshops, USIP's local partner—a former academic—and the academic participants expressed a strong desire for specific programming addressing the current civic education curriculum in Sudan. This curriculum had been modified during the civil war to reflect southerners as the enemy and to strengthen the image of Sudanese people as Islamic and Arab, neglecting the great diversity of the country's tribal, religious, and linguistic identities. Although technically Sudan was in a postconflict democratic transition phase, government power remained largely in the same hands as during the conflict, and thus the prospects for serious overhaul of the curriculum were dim. Nonetheless, it was hoped that a conference might promote discussion of the issue and some movement toward reform.

The conference on strengthening civic education components in the curriculum occurred in December 2007, bringing together educators, education officials, and experts to discuss the current status of civic education in Sudan and to explore avenues for future changes. Experts presented the history of civic education in Sudan, as well as models from other places. Small working groups analyzed the civic education curricula from Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan and presented their results; the primary common finding was a chronic lack of funding for schools resulting in inadequate materials.

Although technically Sudan was in a postconflict democratic transition phase, government power remained largely in the same hands as during the conflict, and thus the prospects for serious overhaul of the curriculum were dim.

Two special events captured the participants' attention during the conference: the performance of the voter education play described above and a session with representatives from the children's parliament. This semiofficial group brings primary-school students together in regular sessions to discuss issues of importance to children in school and to report to the national assembly on their findings. The young students at the civic education conference spoke frankly to participants about the lack of respect they feel in their classrooms, for education in general, for their teachers, and for other students. Teachers were not properly trained or paid, and there was little helpful material on civic education in the curriculum, leading to a lack of understanding of the country's government or any appreciation of its diversity. One student added that he thought there was a lack of love of country in school.

The final session of the conference required participants to identify essential components of positive civic education for Sudan and to recommend goals and objectives for civic education in the Sudanese curriculum. Participants concluded that positive civic education was currently missing from the curriculum and that it was crucial to create a culture of sustainable peace and responsible citizenship. They also heavily emphasized the need to improve teacher training and elevate social standing and respect for teachers in society. Civic education, said participants, should be relevant to daily life, focusing on creating a positive link between the government and its citizens. Despite efforts to involve Ministry of Higher Education officials and key stakeholders, the recommendations of this conference have remained aspirational. USIP had to postpone indefinitely its plans to hold a follow-up conference on creating a national strategy for civic education in the curriculum when key participants' commitment could not be confirmed.

Electoral Violence Prevention

After the first year of citizenship skills programming, it became increasingly clear that participants wanted more details on the specifics of the elections and proper electoral processes.

After the first year of citizenship skills programming, it became increasingly clear that participants wanted more details on the specifics of the elections and proper electoral processes. In late 2008, as USIP considered responding to this demand, increased funding made a more ambitious project feasible. USIP staff worked collaboratively to develop a program of electoral violence prevention (EVP) workshops, to be run in as many parts of the country as possible. The program featured three interwoven components that drew on key elements of a civics-oriented approach: case studies of four other elections on the African continent, including positive and negative lessons about dealing with violence and the roles of various stakeholders in this process; conflict management skills, such as negotiation and problem-solving, that allowed learners to deal with conflict locally; and the citizenship components that provided a long-view perspective on democracy and political participation. All three elements were presented using highly interactive techniques that modeled civic virtues of respect, fairness, and acceptance of diversity, which was especially emphasized during the training-of-trainers phase in late 2009.

The new program was extremely popular from the moment it began. The first workshop was oversubscribed by nearly double the expected number, and USIP found that the three-component recipe and the interactive techniques (exercises, working groups, and the voter education play) worked well. Exercises on stereotyping and communication skills complemented lessons on conflict styles and negotiation. A decision-making exercise complemented the election simulation, and learning about problem solving promoted positive approaches to analyzing the case studies and applying them to Sudan. Over a year and a half, USIP provided EVP training in Khartoum, the Nuba Mountains, southern Sudan, and Darfur. Additionally, two local NGO partners used USIP materials and techniques to extend the programs into eastern Sudan and further within the border regions of the Three Areas.[12]

Among the more important initiatives was an EVP program at the police academy training center in Khartoum, which grew out of earlier invitations for high-ranking members of the police to speak at the workshops on their view of the role of police in ensuring peaceful elections. The talks had been a much-needed opportunity for Sudanese citizens to question a police representative in neutral and safe surroundings. USIP included a number of youth activist and civil society leaders in the police academy workshop to illustrate the importance of understanding and cooperation among key actors in the electoral process. Tension and misunderstanding between police and civil society leaders made this program considerably more difficult, but also more productive, and paved the way for future efforts to establish cooperation. Encouragingly, the police trainers retained the USIP materials and made later efforts, with UN support, to train police throughout the country regarding their proper role during elections.[13]

The final stage in the EVP programs before the election itself was to select and train two groups of community trainers, one from the north and one from the south, who would then return and offer further training in their local communities. This approach not only extended the EVP content's reach into the countryside, but also created a group of trainers with experience in interactive pedagogy and civic virtue modeling skills. The trainee-trainers were selected by having previously participated in the EVP course or demonstrated commitment to being involved in civic activity and training in the future. Trainees based in Khartoum were given a refresher course and a collection of materials and lesson plans. They were then assigned to work in small groups on adapting a specific module of the course to be taught in a joint workshop with their southern counterparts. The Juba group was also given a course with both content and training skills components and assigned the remaining modules for the joint workshop.

In February 2010, the northern and southern groups came together in Juba to present the complete EVP course by themselves. USIP staff observed and provided constructive feedback. Overall the joint program was very successful. Concerns about the nature of the interaction between the northern and southern trainers were quickly eased as participants seemed happy to connect with each other, despite linguistic and ethnic barriers. Enough participants spoke both Arabic and English, or a tribal language, that there were rarely real obstacles to understanding. One such moment, however, occurred during a presentation on using the arts, in which a Khartoum-based team used Arabic songs and poetry. This put an unreasonable demand on the interpreters, who could not translate on the spot. The problem might have been addressed easily with some forethought—such as supplying printed translations and better introductions—and hopefully provided an opportunity to learn about the importance of cultural and linguistic context in training.

In the feedback afterward, participants mentioned that they had learned time management skills and gained confidence in their abilities as facilitators. Many mentioned how much they enjoyed working with their counterparts from other parts of the country. Introducing northern Sudanese to life in the less-developed south was a primary consideration in the design of the workshop series and it proved a fruitful choice. As one northern woman stated, "This was a good chance to communicate with southern brothers and sisters; it shows that we can cooperate." With potential separation of their country imminent, knowledge of conflict management skills, election case studies, and civic education helped participants to feel better equipped for the myriad challenges that might arise during the transitional period. USIP plans to adapt this three-part model for programs on preventing violence during the referendum on self-determination for the south. Many of the EVP trainers went on to provide local community forums before the elections and continue to be a resource for projects by USIP's local partners in Juba and Khartoum.

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Sudan Lessons Learned

Civic education concepts and techniques have proven welcome and needed in Sudan, but there are some issues for consideration:

- *Make creative use of the arts in reaching different sectors and making the message memorable.* Theater is a valuable tool to make important concepts entertaining and memorable, but its magic dims considerably when recorded. Other artistic media should be considered—such as music or poetry—when live theatre is unavailable.

- *Be patient.* Addressing civic education in a national curriculum is a long-term project and requires patience and determination; key stakeholders may talk more than do at first, and many difficult issues may spin off from the core civic education concern, such as teacher training and funding of education generally.

- *Look for alternative approaches to engage in civic education when the most obvious path seems blocked.* Despite the complexity of curricular reform in civic education, it is important to keep the issue alive and find ways to incorporate civic skills and knowledge into other initiatives.

- *Civic education as an issue can build bridges between conflicted groups.* Bringing together groups in tension, such as the police and civil society leaders, can be difficult, but it can also lead to significant breakthroughs when they share an interest in understanding civic issues such as elections. Every possibility to enhance relationships among stakeholders should be considered.

- *Schools are not the only venues and students are not the only targets.* Civic education can be taught effectively in many different contexts and should not be constrained to the primary school curriculum. Post-peace-agreement transitions, constitutional reform, and new elections all provide opportunities to make civic education relevant and meaningful.

Conclusion

Effective programming in civic education requires special focus on classroom techniques; modeling good civic behavior in the classroom is necessary to impart civic skills for participation, in addition to knowledge of rights and processes.

Knowledge of civic rights and development of the skills and practice of peaceful social and political engagement form the core of civic education. Effective programming in civic education requires special focus on classroom techniques; modeling good civic behavior in the classroom is necessary to impart civic skills for participation, in addition to knowledge of rights and processes. Case studies of civic education programming in Iraq and Sudan illustrate the challenges of working in postconflict contexts. These challenges can be met partially by a focus on high-quality materials and teacher training, engagement with education officials at the highest level possible, and sustained attention and adaptation following lessons learned. The cases also show that opportunities arise continually to use civic education more informally, as in periods of constitutional reform or elections, when attention fixes on issues of governance and participation. Using creative techniques, such as music or theater, can carry the message to a wider audience, often more effectively, than printed materials. Together, the theory and practice of civic education stimulates attention to the importance of civic knowledge, skills, and practice in designing peacebuilding support for postconflict societies.

Notes

1. See John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995) and John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1997). For a (relatively recent) review of the literature on civil and human rights and discussion of the distinction, see Johannes Botes, "Conflict Transformation: A Debate over Semantics or a Crucial Shift in the Theory and Practice of Peace and Conflict Studies?" *International Journal of Peace Studies,* vol. 8, no. 2 (autumn/winter 2003), 1–27.

2. For an overview of political theories that strongly emphasize active citizenship, see Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction,* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter 7. One of the most prominent contemporary defenders of the civic tradition is Philip Pettit; the fullest statement of his theory is *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), but an earlier piece, "Freedom as Antipower," *Ethics*, vol. 106, no. 3 (April 1996), 576–604, focuses on civic freedom as a form of ability to contest power, and influenced the understanding of the civic tradition used in this report. On civic education and developing civic virtue specifically, see, e.g., Harry C. Boyte, *Everyday Politics: Reconnecting Citizens and Public Life* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2004); Robert K. Fullinwider, ed., *Public Education in a Multicultural Society: Policy, Theory, Critique* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Cynthia Gibson and Peter Levine, *The Civic Mission of Schools* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003), available online at http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/CivicMissionofSchools.pdf (accessed August 11, 2010); Bradley A. Levinson and Doyle Stevick, *Reimagining Civic Education: How Diverse Societies Form Democratic Citizens* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Judith Torny-Purto, John Schwille, and Jo-Ann Amadeo, eds., *Civic Education across Countries: Twenty-Four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 1999).

3. The rights of groups are based on the needs of individuals to exist within groups and to define and protect the character of those groups, particularly minorities. There are differing views on, and approaches to, the concept of group rights.

4. See, e.g., Steven F. Finkel and Howard R. Ernst, "Civic Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Alternative Paths to the Development of Political Knowledge and Democratic Values," *Political Psychology,* vol. 26, no. 3 (2005), 333–364; Gibson and Levine, *Civic Mission*, 20ff.

5. Finkel and Ernst, "Civic Education," 339.

6. A stereotyping exercise one of the authors has conducted in Sudan bears out this idea. Participants are much less likely to hold extreme stereotypes of groups if they know and work with some members of that group as part of their daily life.

7. For a fuller discussion of service-learning standards, as well as information about research studies supporting the standards, see National Youth Leadership Council, "K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice," available at http://www.nylc.org/pages-newsevents-news-K_12_Service_Learning_Standards_for_Quality_Practice?oid=6091 (accessed August 11, 2010), especially the supporting research document ("K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice: An Annotated Bibliography," available at http://www.nylc.org/objects/publications/StandardsResearch.pdf, accessed August 11, 2010). In the context of this report, like much other research on service learning, these standards draw heavily on programs implemented in the United States and other developed nations. Applying these lessons to postconflict situations should be done with caution.

8. For an empirical review of the effectiveness of student-based learning, see Michael Prince, "Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research," *Journal of Engineering Education,* vol. 93, no. 3 (2004), 223–231.

9. In Iraq, the education system, especially under Saddam Hussein, promoted militarism. See, e.g., Imad Harb, *Higher Education and the Future of Iraq,* USIP Special Report no. 195, 3–4, available at http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr195.pdf (accessed August 11, 2010); David B. Ottaway and Joe Stephens, "In Bid to Shape Post-War Iraq, U.S. Goes By the Schoolbook," Washington Post, April 6, 2003, A32.

10. See Orit Bashkin, "When Mu'awiya Entered the Curriculum—Some Comments on the Iraqi Education System in the Interwar Period," *Comparative Education Review,* vol. 50, no. 3 (August 2006), 346–366.

11. Mohammed Sharif, *Attiat and the Right to Vote Freely OR Returning to the Right is a Virtue,* unpublished manuscript, 2007, on file with the author.

12. The Three Areas are disputed border regions between the states of north and south Sudan; they consist of Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and the Abyei region.

13. As one of the authors observed personally, the police played a restrained and appropriate role throughout the north during the general elections in April 2010.

Other Readings

- *Civil Society in Darfur: The Missing Peace* by Theodore Murphy and Jerome Tubiana (Special Report, September 2010)
- *Local Justice in Southern Sudan* by Cherry Leonardi, Leben Moro, John Ryle, Martina Santschi, and Deborah Isser (Peaceworks, September 2010)
- *Iraq Is Spinning its Wheels, But in the Right Direction* by Daniel Serwer (Peace Brief, July 2010)
- *Improving Natural Resource Management in Sudan* by Paul Sullivan and Natalie Nasrallah (Special Report, June 2010)
- *Education and Conflict in Côte d'Ivoire* by Joseph Sany (Special Report, April 2010)
- *Sudanese Universities as Sites of Social Transformation* by Linda Bishai (Special Report, February 2008)
- *Preventing Media Incitement to Violence in Iraq* by Theo Dolan (Peace Brief, April 2010)