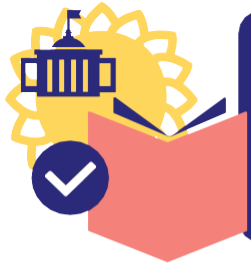




USAID
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Canada



Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy

SEED

Overview



The International Foundation for Electoral Systems' (IFES) civic education programming empowers citizens to participate more effectively in their country's electoral and political processes and provides them with the tools they need to hold their elected representatives accountable for effectual governance. When citizens are not empowered to effectively exercise and defend their or others' democratic rights and responsibilities, the opportunity for disinformation, corruption, and electoral fraud increases, thereby amplifying the potential for leaders to take undemocratic actions that threaten human rights, stability, and prosperity.

IFES's work to support informed, mindful, and active civic participation through intersectional approaches designed to support diverse groups such as young women, ethnic, and religious minority youth and youth with disabilities expands the potential for all citizens to shape their democracies and to be represented in decision-making processes.

To this end, in 2010, IFES developed a global, university-level civic education approach: Strengthening Engagement through

Education for Democracy (SEED). SEED is designed to empower young people to better understand the democratic process and each citizen's role and responsibility within it. The SEED curriculum, materials, and methodology are country-tailored and designed to foster students' democratic values and attitudes while equipping them with the knowledge and skills essential to effective and informed citizenship in digital age democracies as well as closing democratic spaces. Universities have proven to facilitate safe spaces for young people to expand their understanding of democracy and foster community-building among engaged students and their networks.

Through SEED, IFES has worked with universities and education specialists in Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, and Bangladesh to develop fully accredited university-level curricula to introduce citizens to fundamental concepts of democratic citizenship, systems of government, civic participation, and human rights, while building capacity through hands-on, real-world learning experiences.

The core methodology of SEED focuses on three components:

Knowledge



The knowledge-based components of the course cover democratic governance, human rights, civil society and citizen engagement. Cross-cutting themes include gender equality, elections, minority rights, inclusion of and accessibility for persons with disabilities, enfranchisement, good governance, rule of law, media literacy, digital participation, diversity, the role of money in politics, youth participation, and corruption.

Interactive teaching



To strengthen students' skills (including, but not limited to, digital literacy, critical thinking and decision-making, active listening, consensus-building, public speaking, group work, and problem solving), IFES's civic education methodology emphasizes the primacy of interactive teaching methodology (contrary to a traditional lecture-style format). Course professors, selected by the university, receive training on interactive teaching methods through IFES-led continuous professional development sessions with national and international experts.

Action projects



The capstone component of the course is a student action project to encourage leadership and service learning. Through a step-by-step, guided process, students identify an issue in their communities that they recognize as problematic, which they then research and relate to course topics. Ultimately, students are challenged to devise an action plan to address the issue. Through first-hand experience, students hone the knowledge, dispositions, and skills necessary for active, informed citizenship.



Program Highlights and Impact:



GEORGIA

Since 2011

Democracy and Citizenship

38+ universities and vocational schools

13,000+ students engaged

100+ educators trained



IMPACT:

Course evaluations have demonstrated that course students and alumni experienced a positive transformation in their perceptions and understandings of the rights and roles of persons with disabilities, and minorities; applied skills developed through course experiences to academic, professional, and civic endeavors; possessed a strong sense of efficacy toward their ability to affect change; and were committed to the realization of the principles of democracy for all Georgians. Many alumni went on to become civil



society leaders, addressing problems in their communities and becoming champions for democracy in Georgia long after the course. With an eye to sustainability, IFES also supported the establishment of the Civic Education Lectures Association (CELA), which is a network of civic educators that represent the majority of accredited universities across the country; CELA currently maintains Georgia's SEED curriculum. IFES has since partnered with Georgia's Ministry of Education to expand civic education offerings to vocational education institutions.



UKRAINE

Since 2018

Democracy: from Theory to Practice

59+ universities and vocational schools

12,000+ students engaged

134+ educators trained



IMPACT:

Course evaluations have yielded encouraging results on all measures—course instructor interviews and surveys, student surveys and focus groups, classroom observations, and pre- and post-tests. The results demonstrated that students gained knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to effectively monitor and hold the government and members of society accountable to principles of democracy in the digital age.

Using skills developed in the course, since 2021, alumni have gone on to intern at Ukrainian institutions like the Central Election Commission and National Agency on Corruption Prevention. Beyond the knowledge and the skills developed, students also demonstrated a desire to be active citizens. The course alumni organization Youth Democratic Association (YODA) and IFES have organized several extra-curricular activities such as the



DemVision action project competition, DemoGRAtia [interactive game](#), and social media DemTalk events to support current students and maintain robust and active alumni community. Furthermore, in April 2022 IFES helped establish the [Civic Educators Association](#) to help build the capacity of and support course educators.



BANGLADESH Since 2018

Democracy: from Theory to Practice

1+ university offering the course

160+ students engaged

IMPACT:

IFES's Democracy: From Theory to Practice university course gives students a theoretical background in democracy through the SEED methodology and practical and hands-on experience as students conduct projects and research fellowships. Over 160 students have taken part in the course to date through the University of Dhaka. IFES expects to expand the course to a second university in 2023, and up to five additional universities throughout Bangladesh through 2025. The course has been complemented by programming through the Students Against



Violence Everywhere (SAVE) network, expanding beyond 13 public universities and over 1,600 students across all divisions of Bangladesh. IFES continues to mobilize existing SAVE participants through advanced trainings and community-based assignments. Additional webinars and online events, as well as campaigns for safe and inclusive campuses both offline and online, provide much-needed opportunities for education and student activism.



ARMENIA Since 2020

Engaged Citizens

8+ universities offering the course

170+ students engaged

52+ educators trained

IMPACT:

IFES's Engaged Citizens course launched in 2021 at three universities throughout Armenia. Since the launch of the course, the course has expanded into five additional universities. The cohort of alumni of the course is 80 percent women. To date, student action



projects have been given funding through international embassies and have allowed students to advocate for community improvements with the Prime Minister.

If you want to learn more about IFES's efforts to build democracy that delivers for all, visit our website:
www.ifes.org

Additional Resources:

General



Civic Education for Democracy: A Q&A with Dr. Greer Burroughs:
<https://bit.ly/3l0BeNz>



A deeper dive into IFES's SEED methodology:
<https://bit.ly/3nT3v11>

Ukraine



"Democracy: from theory to practice" university course starts in Ukraine:
<https://bit.ly/35SjGit>



Evolution of the course and engagement of Ukrainian youth on democracy and human rights:
<https://bit.ly/2UTeBva>



Innovative civic education course materials introduced at universities across Ukraine:
<https://bit.ly/374plw1>



Ukrainian university educators learn new, innovative civic education methodology:
<https://bit.ly/334LluT>



Civic education course alumni unite to engage more citizens in democracy:
<https://bit.ly/35TGo9R>



Fostering Democratic Citizenship in Times of War:
<https://ifesukraine.org/en/stories/fostering-democratic-citizenship-in-times-of-war/>



NACP Interns Lead by Example:
<https://ifesukraine.org/en/news/nacp-interns-lead-by-example/>



Educators and the Future of Civic Education in Ukraine
<https://ifesukraine.org/en/news/educators-and-the-future-of-civic-education-in-ukraine/>



A video presentation of the course in Ukraine:
<https://bit.ly/339revy>



A video of Ukrainian students and teachers sharing highlights of their experience with the course:
<https://bit.ly/3lXZpO3>

Georgia



Civic Education for youth in Georgia:
<https://bit.ly/36ZAaF1>



Local solutions for sustainable civic education at Georgian universities:
<https://bit.ly/3pW7d5c>



Civic Education Lecturers Association:
<https://bit.ly/36ZnoY2>

Armenia



Engaged Citizen: A New Interactive Course for Armenian University Students:
<https://www.ifes.org/news/engaged-citizen-new-interactive-course-armenian-university-students>



Getting Results on the Bureaucratic Merry-Go-Round in Armenia:
<https://www.ifes.org/news/getting-resultsbureaucraticmerry-go-round-armenia>