



Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy

SEED

Overview



Education – in particular, civic education – is a linchpin in building inclusive, resilient, and sustainable democracies. Through its **Strengthening Engagement through Education for Democracy (SEED)** methodology, IFES offers a contemporary, interactive approach to civic education to thousands of university and vocational college students worldwide through innovative, semester-long courses. The country-tailored courses introduce young people to fundamental concepts of democratic citizenship, systems of government, civic participation, and human rights, while deepening soft and hard skills through hands-on, real-world learning experiences. SEED is designed and taught with an eye to mindful citizenship in the digital age and to counter the immediate and long-term threats posed by disinformation. Through SEED, IFES has worked with over **165 universities and colleges**, and over **450 education specialists in Georgia, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic, Serbia, and Sri Lanka** to develop and offer fully accredited university and vocational college-level curricula. To date, over **37,000 students** have completed IFES' semester-long, civic education courses.

SEED Methodology

Knowledge



The knowledge-based components of the courses 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' 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.

Civic Action Projects



The capstone component of the courses 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.

SEED Impact



Through these courses, students deepen knowledge and skills that are essential for democratic citizenship in the digital age. Skills include critical thinking, active listening, public speaking, conflict resolution, the ability to view issues from various perspectives, teamwork, media and digital literacy. Knowledge gains include increased understanding of human rights, good governance, civic participation, and the role of civil society in democracies. In Bangladesh, 94 percent of students noted that the course significantly enhanced their knowledge of how a democracy should function. In Ukraine, 84 percent of students noted that the course helped them learn ways to be active in helping to rebuild and strengthen Ukraine. One Ukrainian student taking the course during war noted, "We develop skills throughout our small projects... these same skills can be used to help all citizens of Ukraine." Students and alumni of the course also demonstrate and report an increased understanding of disinformation and how they can more consciously digest media and information. Beyond deepening their knowledge and skills, students and alumni of SEED courses demonstrate an increased desire to be active citizens and a sense of efficacy that they can play a role in moving democracy forward for collective benefit.



Global Snapshot of SEED:



Georgia

Since 2012

Democracy and Citizenship

72 universities and vocational schools

18,900 students engaged

150 educators trained



Ukraine

Since 2018

Democracy: from Theory to Practice

64 universities and vocational schools

16,700 students engaged

159 educators trained



Bangladesh

Since 2018

Democracy: from Theory to Practice

5 universities and vocational schools

600 students engaged

25 educators trained



Armenia

Since 2020

Engaged Citizens

14 universities and vocational schools

800 students engaged

74 educators trained





Kyrgyz Republic Since 2022

We and the State: Fundamentals of Citizenship

10 universities and vocational schools

200 students engaged

20 educators trained



Serbia Since 2022

Democracy: From Theory to Practice

4 universities and vocational schools

60 students engaged

11 educators trained



Sri Lanka Since 2023

Democracy: From Theory to Practice

1 university

20 students engaged

18 educators trained



Student and teacher reflections on IFES SEED courses around the world

“

“In Georgia, with our history, we have the feeling that we served government. Now, I realize how many rights I have and what I can do.” – a student from Georgia.

“

“Thanks to the Civic Education course, students are presenting their projects at this event today. Before that, they had no idea what a project was, how to write one, or what steps to take to make it a success.” – an educator from the Kyrgyz Republic.

“

“We are always waiting for someone else to come and fix a problem. We realized through the course that with our own initiatives, we didn’t have to wait.” – a student from Georgia.

“

“Due to the course, I learned more about the work of local government, the concepts of tolerance and inclusion and refined project-based skills. But most importantly, I am no longer afraid to take the initiative and solve problems myself.” – a student from Ukraine.

“

“This war is being waged not only on the frontline, but also in the information field. And here you need to teach and be trained to check information yourself, not to introduce disinformation. Russian propaganda works cunningly, so you need to be able to check information and teach people about it. Thanks to this course, I began to pay attention to the need to share news information with other people...It is important to share verified information in a war.” – a student from Ukraine.

