

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

PROGRAM FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION AND MANAGEMENT, 2ND PHASE

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION STUDY

(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents an assessment of the *development effectiveness* of the USAID-sponsored program for the *formation of young leaders* (FYL) on its 2nd phase in the Dominican Republic, to the extent that such effectiveness can be gaged by the observable modernization changes induced by the Program in the way the political system does business in the country. The study logically follows the evaluation of the Program's 1st phase, completed in 2008. However, of necessity and by design, the 2nd phase established a more stringent methodological framework for the present study, including a better focus on evaluation metrics and the use of control and treatment groups to better establish attribution of results. These methodological precisions, plus changes operated in the intervention itself, created discontinuities in the evaluation premises between the first and the second phases that render impossible for this study to be valid for the Program as a whole, from a strict epistemological point of view. However, this circumstance has not precluded the reaching of important conclusions and lessons for the intervention as a whole; the same that are disclosed in what follows.

The document is divided in three large sections. First, a *Preface on evaluability* is included for the more technically inclined reader, where the above mentioned design constraints and other methodological issues are discussed. Second, the principal body of the study is presented, discussing its main findings and conclusions about the *results chain* -outputs, outcomes and impacts- achieved by the operation, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, as well as a section on recommendations. Finally, a statistical appendix is included, where all relevant instruments and data have been compiled for the record.

Relevant findings

The main section of the report starts by showing that the program did submit its expected deliverables (outputs) well enough in terms of quantity, quality and opportunity, so that the ensuing results (outcomes & impacts) can be claimed to be at least time-correlated with, and attributed to, the Program. The rest of the main section focuses on probing whether the Program's development hypothesis materialized through the following results chain: *Young leaders trained* ➔ *Knowledge gained* ➔ *Individual attitudes changed* ➔ *Organizations' practice changed*, toward a more democratic, transparent and institutionalized political system. The section ends with a discussion of the relevant study conclusions and recommendations.

Since the discontinuities above described precluded a coherently comparative research of the totality of changes that may have occurred since the program's first phase, it follows that the time relevant for observation of the results chain by the present research is not the full eight years of the two phases, but only the time elapsed since the Program resumed activities in 2009. In turn, this time span cannot, generally, be considered enough for *development impacts* strictly defined -in this case: permanent changes in organizational structures and practices- to have fully materialized yet. Still, the available evidence of *development outcomes*, including intermediate behavioral changes observed in young leaders, is more abundant and robust now than was ever found in the Program's 1st phase.

This provides enough grounds to expect the values and habits instilled by the Program in young leaders to eventually yield structural organizational changes, as the several cohorts of program graduates first promote them internally or, by rising through the rank and file of organizations, possibly even enforce them in the future. Specifically concerning the Program's development outcomes, the study investigates in detail the attitudinal and behavioral changes observed in Program graduates, both as *trend results* measured during the execution of the Program's 2nd phase (period 2009-2011) and as *end results* measured after its closing (2012). The field surveys allowed a systematic comparison between attitudes and behaviors of individuals from the treatment and control groups, as measured by the following six pre-defined results indicators, required by USAID: (i) *knowledge gained*; (ii) *implementation of training courses for the organizations' grassroots*; (iii) *submission of proposals for organizational reform*; (iv) *increased management responsibility bestowed on young leaders*; (v) *increased participation of young leaders in election processes*; and (vi) *increased young leaders' involvement in mechanism of municipal participation or inter-party dialogue initiatives*. Comparison with individuals of control groups was impractical in the case of indicators of *knowledge gain* for reason discussed in the text. Researchers added the measurement of a seventh indicator: *increased participation of young leaders in practices of transparency and accountability*.

The data on the *trend* outcomes, measured at the *base-line* point, *year-end* point of each cohort and *program-end* point through surveys administered to the same set of individuals at each point, evidence how behaviors and attitudes of the graduates (treatment group) clearly start to differ after the courses from those of the control group in all cohorts, even while the Program was still under execution. The behavioral and attitudinal trend differences are more consistent and statistically significant -i.e. more attributable to the Program- in cohorts 2009 and 2010. This result does not reflect negatively on the Program's effectiveness because, in the researchers' opinion, the *base-line – year-end – program-end* series for cohorts 2009 and 2010 are better representations of a true behavioral evolution than that for the 2011 cohort. There are two reasons for this: (i) the 2011 cohort includes only two points of measurements (base-line and program-end); and (ii) more time for change in behavior naturally elapsed for the 2009 & 2010 cohorts until the Program ended in 2012.

Another clear trend result established by the present study, in what concerns the Program's development outcomes, is the pronounced and statistically significant equalization effect the program produced between sexes, concerning all measured outcome indicators. Very frequently starting with lower values at the base-line, young female leaders consistently showed progress in all relevant indicators, and frequently end up with roughly equal or higher values than those of their male counterparts. Female participants in the Program also surpass the normal percentage of participation of women in leadership positions currently existing in the political parties participating. This constitutes another clear contribution of the Program toward equalization between sexes in the political system.

Program impacts were expected to be visible structural transformations in the participating organizations, formally instituting: (i) *gender equity and youth participation*; (ii) *extended training for party members*; (iii) *improved transparency and accountability*. The study found no evidence that the Program has so far induced any but the most tentative modernization processes inside the political

organizations involved, concerning the mentioned institutional transformations. There is, however, clear evidence for early and localized evolutions on issues such as gender equity, upward movement of graduates -especially to local leadership positions- and a minimal, but visible, transformation process to expand political education and more transparent practices. This evidence, which in some cases is circumstantial but in most cases is supported by hard and statistically significant data, suggests the presence of what we may call both general and specific preliminary “trend impacts”. For instance, there are reasons to argue that some of the behavioral outcomes found to be statistically significant in Program graduates may already be entrenched enough in their normal practice as to keep contradicting prevailing attitudes and be maintained in the face of strong currents in the opposite direction; which may very well be the mark of a true behavioral precursor of longer term, more structural changes to come.

It can also be reasonably expected that the progressively increasing presence of Program graduates in positions of leadership at all levels of the parties, will eventually result in their greater weight on institutional decisions and reform processes. So, because impacts usually require extended periods to mature in practice, the longer-term changes that apparently are currently brewing just under the surface as results of the Program may just need additional time and care to come to fruition as open institutional transformations. Therefore, as it was the case with the evaluation of the 1st phase, the present study is forced to conclude that young leaders educated in the modern democracy paradigm by the Program perhaps must still gain further access to power positions in order to be more effective at their institutional change initiatives.

Main conclusions

The facts that: (i) all intermediate and final products of the Program were actually delivered in the quantity generally expected, with appreciable quality, and -controlling for the fact that there was a delay at the start, for reasons specified in the main text- within the time stipulated at inception; and (ii) statistically significant differences have been documented between base-line and later measured values, and between treatment and control groups, provide grounds for attribution of results to the workings of the Program, both in knowledge gained and in the ensuing behaviors observed.

The statistical significance test applied to the scores achieved by students in the Program’s courses proved beyond any reasonable doubt that participants did acquire new knowledge and skills that were relevant for the eventual development of their leadership and political management competencies; especially in the case of young female leaders, whose knowledge levels the Program clearly equalized with those of the male young leaders participating. Direct comparisons with the knowledge gain of individuals from the control groups were not feasible; but, because the study factored in the possibility that individuals of the control groups might have received separate, relevant training, independent of the Program during the same period, and because results showed statistically significant differences between the two groups on that variable, with a negligible weight of such equivalent training in control groups, the conclusion is reached with high degree of confidence that the observed differences in behaviors between the two groups are more aptly

correlated with the presence of political training in the Treatment Groups, and the lack thereof in the Control Groups, than with mere chance or other factors uncontrolled-for.

The conclusion about knowledge gain based on the hard evidence of statistics and likelihood tests applied to scores must be complemented by the qualitative opinion of senior political leaders interviewed, who felt that the gain of knowledge in young leaders went beyond the sole acquiring of theoretical concepts and practical skills, to actually include “experiencing politics” in a way different than that imposed by the currently dominant political culture. This aspect of the knowledge gain has been generally associated with the sort of interfacing and networking with other political and social leaders that the Program allowed among its students during the courses: a kind of interfacing in which adversaries are not necessarily seen as “enemies”, and discussions can be based on principles, ideas, rational arguments and programmatic proposal, rather than on pure sectarian prejudices; and a kind of networking conducive to healthy primary relations, instead of the usual inter-party confrontation and rancor. These are all important qualitative insights suggesting that at least some evolution toward more constructive exchange practices and relations among political leaders, and between them and the citizenry at large, showed up during the Program courses.

The conclusions concerning other more permanent ensuing behavioral outcomes, that would presumably be associated with the knowledge gained from the courses, are more complicated. The study found that Program designers did include in the expected results chain behavioral outcomes that could be heavily interfered by factors originating outside the Program’s influence domain, and made the implicit assumption that those factors would concur with the Program development goals. Cases in point are the outcomes measured by indicators such as: the *promotion of young leaders to positions of higher responsibility*, or the *participation of young leaders as candidates in election processes*; which chiefly depend on decisions basically made by the current senior leadership of the organizations involved, and do not necessarily have much to do with knowledge gain or, for that matter, with any behavioral decision by the young leaders themselves. Much less vulnerable to such extraneous factors are other behavioral outcome indicators, such as: *Implementation of training courses for the organizations’ grassroots*; the *submission of proposals for organizational reform*; the *increased young leaders’ involvement in municipal participation or inter-party dialogue initiatives*; and the *increased young leaders’ transparency & accountability*. The study has found sizable differences in results between the latter type of outcome -herein called *type A*- and the former type - herein called *type B*.

Concerning type B indicators, the Program implicit assumption was that the current leadership of the participating political parties and C.S.O.s would promote the appointment -or the election- of graduates from the Program to positions of higher responsibility within each organization, in order to take advantage of the “investment” made in the training of those young leaders and to further the organization’s advancement and institutional strength. Since these expectations are rational and the resulting promotions would, presumably, contribute to the effectiveness of the Program by placing progressively increasing numbers of graduates in decision-making positions, the underlying development hypothesis is cogent and essentially acceptable. However, the fact remains that the necessary concurrent factor -the decision to promote the young leaders- ultimate lies with the

organization's current senior leadership or the relevant election processes, and not within the Program's influence domain. Therefore, not achieving this particular type of outcome cannot be necessarily held against the quality of the Program's performance; but not having made the concurrence of such an important external factor explicit enough as a critical assumption in the intervention's logical framework -so that an appropriate risk management strategy might have been pursued- can certainly be held against the quality of the Program's design.

Predictably enough, the research data shows, as a general rule, that there are much greater and statistically significant changes, both between base-line and later measurements, and between the treatment and control groups, in what concerns type A indicators than those found concerning type B indicators. The forced conclusion is, therefore, that type A outcome indicator differences are generally better correlated with the workings of the Program; while type B outcome indicator results suggest the presence and workings of other factors, external to the Program. Behavioral changes measured by type A indicators have been also found to be mostly positive (upward trend) and fairly pronounced in the Treatment groups during Program execution; while the trend in Control groups concerning the same type A indicators was generally much flatter or outright downward (negative changes) in many cases, during the same period. This forces the conclusion that the Program was successful in inducing those behaviors that were more clearly under its influence domain.

The most salient conclusion concerning type A outcome indicators is that, although the research confirms positive changes in the treatment groups during the execution of the Program well above those of the control group, in behaviors relating to *training directed to the organizations' grassroots* and *submission of reform proposals*, the most statistically significant behavioral changes occurred in the areas of *inter-party dialogue* and *accountability practices*. The upward (positive) behavioral changes concerning the dialogue of graduates with political adversaries stand out, particularly because they dramatically contrasts with the clear downward trend of that behavior in the control individuals during the same period: a trend that could be expected in times of high political tension, as was the period of Program execution, during which two major political elections occurred. Therefore, the fact that Program graduates have behaved in the opposite direction, with high statistical significance during that period, is a very salient Program outcome. Also worth emphasizing are the statistically significant differences between the treatment and control groups concerning behaviors of transparency and accountability toward superiors, subordinates and the general public. These results are remarkable because they also contrast with an observed downward trend in the corresponding behavior of individuals in the control groups, during the same period. The positive trend in the treatment groups is even more remarkable in the case of disclosure toward the outside public, because this is neither a mandatory, nor a normally expected behavior -as, for instance, reporting to superiors might be in hierarchical organizations such as political parties- and arguably constitutes a truer sign of transparency. Behavioral changes have been generally found to be even more preponderant, stronger and more statistically significant in the case of young female leaders than in their male counterparts, in all cohorts and in all type A outcome indicators.

Therefore, there are grounds to support the conclusion that these new Program-induced behaviors may very well be presursor signs of more permanent transformations to come, as such behaviors

get entrenched enough in the young leaders' normal practice as to even contradict prevailing attitudes; and as the demonstration effect of such behaviors generate some contagion inside their organizations; and as the clear gender equalization effect of the Program strengthen the young female leaders' positions and their weight in future decision along the direction they are showing in their behavior; i.e.: one which is more inclined to education, institutional reform, inter-party dialogue and habits of transparency. However this conclusion is dampened by the more dismal results obtained in the type B outcome indicators, which show that the external factors required to concur in order for these outcomes to materialize, have not necessarily concurred; especially in the case of those associated with decisions by current senior leadership in the political parties.

No all type B indicators showed "dismal" results during the Program execution. Concerning the *participation of young leaders as candidates in election processes* the observed trend has been positive in all course cohorts, both in the individuals of control and treatment groups. The problem is, however, that not only changes in the value of that indicator are relatively small and not statistically significant, but that the trend is exactly the opposite in what concerns *young leaders being promoted (appointed) to higher positions*. This trend has been verified also both in control and treatment groups, with small and not statistically significant differences between the two, as well. Since statistical tests suggest a low correlation with the workings of the Program, the conclusion is forced that these results should be taken as consequences of factors operating outside the influence domain of the intervention. The fact remains, however, that the promotion decisions made by current senior leadership of the organizations appear not to have aligned with the Program development hypothesis, quite as expected.

The evidence also gives ground to the conclusion that the relative lack of support by authorities, especially in political parties, has not only affected the promotion of Program graduates up the organizational ranks. It has also been manifest in the somewhat tepid reception of graduates' initiatives inside the organizations. Surveys show that significant pluralities or majorities of graduates have developed and submitted proposal both in the area of education and in the area of institutional reforms, toward modernization in practices and procedures. But also significant pluralities or majorities have reported that their initiatives in the educational area did not necessarily meet with a corresponding proactivity on the part of the senior leadership in their respective political organizations. The relative resistance, or lack of attention, from senior leaders to the institutional reform initiatives of the Program graduates can also be inferred from the relative small proportion of young leaders reporting that such initiatives were approved or met with success. Even among those who felt that their initiatives succeeded, in both areas of concern, very small proportions of survey respondents cared to mention specifically that authorities in their organizations have lent support to the initiatives

Additional complementary conclusions are afforded by data from field surveys done after the closing of the Program, which shed light on the medium-term persistence of behavioral changes observed during the Program execution, allowing some confirmation of changes, or providing important qualifications to those trend results; as well as additional qualitative angles for interpretation of the data. These ex post surveys have revealed an all important exception to the general lackluster

support from senior leadership, especially in political parties, that we discussed above. This prominent exception relates, once again, to the performance of young female leaders participating in the Program. A first important general conclusion on female young leaders is that, not only they have consistently outperformed male young leaders in all type A behavioral outcomes, but they have done so in type B behavioral outcomes as well. For instance, despite the downward trend in the promotion of young leaders in general -treatment and control groups- the opposite has consistently occurred in the case of female graduates who, as a final result, have been promoted in greater proportions than their male counterparts; the majority of promotions occurring to provincial or municipal levels and below in the organizations.

Also, the ascend of young leaders to positions of higher responsibility does not only occur through direct promotion (appointment) but also through open election processes. In this sense, the ex post data confirms that a significant majority of Programa graduates have run for elective posts, and that also a significant portion of those running have actually won the elections they ran in. This result is even more pronounced in the case of female graduates, with statistically significant differences with respect to the electoral success of male graduates. The conclusion follows, therefore, that, if sustained, the more abundant presence of Program female graduates in leadership posts within the organizations, promoted by appointment or by election, can be expected to eventually result in a greater weight exerted by women on institutional decisions and reform processes, especially within the political parties.

Finally, another important conclusion concerning female young leaders is that they have also been significantly more successful than male young leaders in having their initiatives and proposals approved by the superiority in their political parties. All these results confirmed for female Program graduates restores much credence to the conclusion that long term impacts of the Program, although not openly evident yet, may indeed just “brewing under the surface” and require additional time and care to be realized.

Recommendations

The section on recommendations include a number of suggestions based on the study analysis and conclusions, and designed to feed-back political parties, the private sector, civil society organizations and the USAID mission, about ways to build on achievements and keep improving performance in future political modernization efforts of this type. Recommendations run the gamut from issues of methodology and program design through ways to improve the intervention development effectiveness and sustainability. First, in the researcher's opinion, the fact that the study yields enough precursor evidences to suggest that at least some of the final structural transformations intended by the Program (1st and 2nd phases) may be already in the offing -albeit not openly visible yet- argues in favor of maintaining this development intervention, with the design improvements suggested; and this not only in order to ensure long term impacts, but also to avoid the wastage represented by the possibility that hard-fought-for changes, which are still budding, may be reversed at the end by the forces resisting modernization, for want of a more prescient and perseverant educational effort.

Researchers also recommend increasing the intervention's potential to induce structural changes by better identifying possible threats to effectiveness originating outside the interventions' curfew (external factors) that may be mitigated through risk management strategies; and better targeting factors retarding political modernization which are anchored in the social environment. Ways are suggested to adjust the course's design to further help young leaders in sharpening the focus and enhancing the practical feasibility of their reform proposal within their respective organizations. These include inducing more systematically in the participants the practice of external outreach, especially vis-à-vis the community at large, and finding ways to strengthen the graduates' ability to identify and handle issues of incidence and viability of organizational change, and to better flesh out their initiatives with colleagues and superiors. Other recommendations refer to ways of making the learning experience of participants in the Program courses more result-oriented, including the addition of practical activities, shared with other leaders, as part of the curricular design, and emphasizing the training on digital networking early on in the courses, in order to elicit in the participants the associated habits as soon as possible in the process.

Recommendations are also included for better handling key methodological design aspects that, in the researchers' opinion, produced difficulties that could be avoided concerning the measurement of Program development results; such as the decision to repeat each year the selection of control and treatment groups, which may have exacerbated sensitivities concerning the selection criteria and processes. It is also recommended to apply demographic proportionality criteria in programming courses per region, and a closer supervision of program monitoring studies, to preclude such practices as the application of excessively prolific survey questionnaires and undue changes in survey questions. Finally, some suggestions are also included concerning longer term sustainability of the effort, by better inducing and increased involvement of local resources, and ownership of the Program by the political leadership in the country.