

# Civic Education

Civic education in constitution-making is part of a broader process of [public outreach and consultation](#) which is usually undertaken during a participatory constitution-making process. Civic education is used to prepare the citizenry for participation in the constitution-making process. For this purpose, civic education typically covers matters such as (i) the constitution-making process itself; (ii) what a constitution is, why it is important, etc.; (iii) specific constitutional issues; and (iv) information about the constitutional drafts, as they are produced. [Civic education](#) is usually complemented by a [public consultation](#) process, as well as an ongoing programme of [constitution-making body \(CMB\) communications](#) and outreach.

This paper discusses the following topics:

1. Why Civic Education is Conducted
2. When Civic Education Typically Occurs
3. Who Undertakes Civic Education
  - How are efforts coordinated?
  - Partnering with Civil Society
  - Working with Political Parties
  - Working with the Media
4. How Civic Education is Implemented

## 1 WHY CIVIC EDUCATION IS CONDUCTED

Civic education is an essential component of a participatory constitution-making process. It informs the public when and how they will be able to present their views (allowing them time to prepare), it provides the arguments for why participation is important (laying the foundation for a nationally owned constitution), and it empowers citizens to make more informed contributions. Particularly in countries emerging from conflict or transitioning to democracy after a long period of autocracy, civic education can be essential in helping the public to better understand their rights and duties as citizens and the common features of democratic government.

See below table describing the modalities, results and uses of public participation in various constitutional processes.

## 2 WHEN CIVIC EDUCATION TYPICALLY OCCURS

Civic education can occur at the earliest moments of the [constitutional review process](#) and potentially before the review process even officially begins. For example, if the public is to weigh in on the structure of the process itself (or in some contexts what is referred to as “talks about

talks”), then an initial education campaign on the need for constitutional reform and procedural options might be appropriate.

As a constitutional adviser, questions that might be asked to help inform when civic education should occur are: Is the public being invited to offer their opinion on any aspect of the process? If so, do they need information in order to be able to more meaningfully contribute? Affirmative answers to these questions typically point towards education at different points during the constitution-making process:

- Before the process formally begins to help frame and design the process itself, or to raise awareness of, interest in, and support for the pending process.
- At the very beginning of the process to set the context, to explain why constitutional reform is needed, to introduce the constitutional roadmap (ie. how the process is being structured), key actors, and central issues, to educate the public on the existing constitutional framework and options for specific constitutional matters and to inform people about opportunities for participation and stimulate discussion on key issues. At this point, a civic education programme will lay the groundwork for a subsequent [public consultation](#) process.
- After a draft is produced by the constitution-making body, either to educate the people about its contents, empower people to comment on the draft itself, or both (see [South Africa working drafts](#)).
- In the run-up to a referendum, in order to educate the people on the final text, and how the referendum will be conducted.
- After adoption to educate the public about the new constitution, key provisions, civic responsibilities, and fundamental rights. In Colombia, for example, after 1991 a government-led campaign to spread knowledge about the new constitution entailed its translation to seven different indigenous languages as well as the inclusion of a new subject in school curricula dedicated to teaching about the new constitution.

### 3 WHO UNDERTAKES CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education can be done by anyone, though common actors include:

- The official constitution-making body, including specially designated units/staff;
- Government bodies, for example an electoral commission or a human rights or democracy commission (In Colombia (1991) most education and outreach functions were performed by the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Constitutional Reform (Consejería Presidencial para la Reforma de la Constitución), which later was re-labeled as the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Constitutional Development (Consejería Presidencial para el Desarrollo de la Constitución); it was in place for two years after the process of drafting had been completed (1991-1993) and was in charge of a nation-wide campaign of awareness and education on the new constitution);
- Academic institutions;
- Political parties;
- Media; and
- Civil society organizations (CSOs), including professional associations and NGOs.

#### 3.1 How are efforts coordinated?

Issues of coordination and the use of official vs. nonofficial civic educators frequently arise. The constitution-making body will need to decide early on if it wants to formally partner with other actors, and if so, to what extent. The argument for partnership is that it multiplies the effort of the CMB, allowing more people to be reached. It also ensures coordinated messaging; as it may

allow the CMB to inform (or even approve/regulate) the content used by other actors, which can be important to ensuring a consistent and accurate message is delivered to the public.

Coordination can also help ensure that all geographic areas and groups are targeted for education, and avoid the scenario where separate groups focus on the same areas to the exclusion of others. Finally, partnership (even if only nominal) may increase the feeling on the part of unofficial actors, such as civil society, that they have more direct involvement in – and hence greater ownership of – the constitution-making process, thus increasing overall support and legitimacy.

A few processes (e.g., South Sudan) have sought to preclude non-official actors from engaging in civic education (usually at a cost to the public support for the process itself). Though political factors may have contributed to this decision, at the same time, it is useful to note that not all CSOs act as neutral actors. Some individuals and organizations come to the process with very specific views, and it is crucial that the CMB civic education is not used as an opportunity for those groups to advocate for their particular issues. That said, CSOs should have every right to direct their own advocacy towards the CMB – they just need to do that as part of the [public consultation](#) process, not in their role as an educator.

### **3.2 Partnering with Civil Society**

Often, civil society engages in civic education efforts outside the formal process, separately from the CMB. In such cases, officials of the CMB may want to proactively share information with CSOs (NGOs, academia, etc.) as early as possible in order to promote consistent messaging about the constitution making process (as opposed to views on specific constitutional issues, for which there will always be multiple and competing messages); the first body to develop a civic education curricula, for example, is most likely to have that content mainstreamed and utilized by diverse actors, hence the importance of the CMB taking the lead.

There can be challenges when a CMB attempts to form partnerships with CSOs to undertake civic education. A broader set of actors will require greater organization and resources on the part of the CMB, not only at the front end of the partnership when the CMB will need to engage in training and funding support, but also in terms of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The CMB also needs to be careful over how it identifies partners, to avoid conflicts over who gets chosen.

Some risks can be mitigated by a policy of “come one, come all” – though this increases the difficulty of logistical oversight and can create its own set of problems where special interest CSOs which may not demonstrate democratic and rights-based values want to partner. A transparent selection process can help in such cases. For example, UNDP often uses an “expression of interest” process to enable all CSOs to apply to be part of a civic education process, but then selects CSO partners based on their demonstrated capacity in order to ensure effective use of scarce resources. A CSO [code of conduct](#) signed by all educators, or a memorandum of understanding between the CMB and educators, can ensure that all actors know what is expected of them and the consequences of inappropriate conduct.

### **3.3 Working with Political Parties**

The involvement of political parties in civic education deserves separate mention, as it raise specific challenges. Civic education should – as much as possible – be neutral, apolitical, and objective as to locally contentious issues. It should not be combined with advocacy over specific outcomes. While any societal group or institution is capable of preferences, political parties are specifically organized around them and may be perceived as having a partisan agenda. Further, political parties are likely engaging in civic education to increase votes. Despite these challenges political parties in Latin America have played a prominent role in civic education, while in other

regions their role has been more limited. Where political parties seek to engage in civic education efforts a code of conduct may help reduce concerns over partisanship. Such a code might require the party to openly publicize who they are (and this requirement might be appropriate for any CSO engaging in civic education).

### 3.4 Working with the Media

The [media](#) will likely play a significant role in civic education, both as a vehicle for the CMB to get its message to the public (for example, through public messages and programs) and as an independent actor – for example by developing its own programming (perhaps a talk show with constitutional experts). It may be wise, therefore, for the CMB to conduct a training for the media in order to increase the likelihood of accurate and responsible programming. A number of UN-supported processes have included training programmes for the media, including the 2010-12 Somalia media programme with BBC World Trust, the current Sierra Leone media training on the constitution and the new Libya media partnership with the BBC World Trust.

## 4 HOW CIVIC EDUCATION IS IMPLEMENTED

The methods used to educate the public need to be tailored to local circumstances, including cultural mores, language diversity, levels of literacy, the size of the country, and geographical accessibility. Different mechanisms will be needed to reach different groups, with the rural poor and marginalized citizens typically hardest to reach. Past processes have used television, radio, the Internet (including social media like Facebook and Twitter), mobile theatre, songs and poems, SMS texting, as well as workshops, meetings, pamphlets, and books (For a more in-depth examination of approaches to civic education, see [Interpeace handbook](#), p. 91-107).

Careful organization and planning for civic education campaigns is critical. While each process will be different, there are some tasks which are common to most processes and been collated in this template civic education work plan.

In any process, a critical step towards a coherent civic education program is the development of a core curriculum, which will not only form the basis of official civic education efforts, but can be used by other actors (civil society in particular) that wish to contribute to the overall civic education effort. The curriculum should be developed as early as possible – both because civic education should start early and because an official curriculum will minimize contradictory messages and misinformation. While the curriculum will vary depending on the context and issues likely to be central to the constitutional dialogue, several themes typically reoccur. Civic education typically covers the following issues:

1. The process
  - a. The legal/political context of the constitutional moment
  - b. The [actors/bodies](#) managing the process
  - c. The time line and roadmap
  - d. Opportunities for public engagement – when and where [consultation](#) will take place and advice to citizens on how to participate
2. What is a constitution?
  - a. Roles and functions
  - b. Why constitutions are important/how they impact people's lives
3. The nation's constitutional history
4. Explanations of substantive constitutional issues and questions that might guide people's thinking on the issues
5. Explanations of constitutional drafts/provisions as they are produced

6. Some skills education, for instance with respect to how to fill in submissions, in order to enhance the value of public consultations. Such skill-building civic education, rather than content-focused, can also build democratic skills and practices for the long-term.

In addition, many processes have also developed a *manual* for civic educators, in addition to the curriculum itself. The manual is more of a teaching tool, which takes the curriculum and supplements it with training methodologies. The manual may lay out the objectives of the civic education program, the role of the educator, the issues that are to be covered, and modalities, techniques, and approaches for teaching. It may also contain additional guidance for educators, including a code of conduct.

## Public Participation<sup>1</sup>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Modalities</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Uses</i>
Spain (1978)	No official direct public participation.  However, frequent demonstrations and expressions of public interest as well as robust media coverage.	-	-
Nicaragua (1987)	CSOs invited to testify before commission.  150,000 copies of first draft disseminated around country.  73 town hall meetings heard around country for comments on draft. Town hall meetings broadcast live on radio.	100,000 people attended town halls. 2,500 presentations by citizens 1,800 written submissions.	CA appointed 22 person committee to review public inputs, prepare an advisory report, and write second draft. A number of changes were made based on public inputs.
Brazil (1988)	CA rules allowed civil society, private citizens, and CA members to present suggestions to the thematic subcommittees.  PRODASEN (Government run center for data and information) sent out over 5 million questionnaires to voters and CSOs. Also set up a data bank containing results of 72,719 popular suggestions.  Subcommittees held 182 public hearings.  Some (but not all) sessions of CA broadcast live on radio and TV. CA had a media center that produced 716 TV programs, 700 radio programs, 3000 hours of video and 4,871 interviews with CA members. Five minute segments on CA's work aired twice a day.  CA disseminated a journal on CA's proceedings.	Civil society and citizens presented 11,989 suggestions to the subcommittees even before they began their work.  Citizens could present "popular amendments" to the entire CA with at least 30,000 signatures of voters (after committees had finished work). 120 popular amendments were submitted to the CA. Each amendment also gave the right for a 20 minute presentation to entire CA.	Unclear
Namibia (1990)	Substantial information campaign for CA elections. CA deliberations were open and covered by press.		Unofficial public participation was so wide-ranging and intense that referendum was seen as unnecessary.

<sup>1</sup> The information in this table is derived from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) 2010 publication *Framing the State in Times of Transition: Case Studies in Constitution Making*, which is available online at: <http://www.usip.org/publications/framing-the-state-in-times-transition>.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Modalities</i>	<i>Results</i>	<i>Uses</i>
Colombia (1991)	<p>Government set up 1580 working groups around the country to receive proposals from citizens and groups.</p> <p>CA requested proposals from government bodies. Non-government could also submit proposals (but carried less weight).</p>	<p>Over 100,000 proposals for constitutional reforms submitted for review by the working groups.</p> <p>131 official and 28 other proposals received.</p>	Proposals were studied by commissions/working groups and contributed to draft constitution.
Cambodia (1993)	<p>Public participation largely from UNTAC human rights efforts and largely consisted of information dissemination and education.</p> <p>Human Rights orgs went to the provinces to conduct workshops and forums on the constitution and human rights.</p> <p>Formal education through schools and informal education through civil society.</p> <p>Also leaflets, brochures, stickers, balloons, comic books, and posters. Radio and TV programs.</p>	Education and training directly reached approx. 120,000 people. Mass communications reached millions.	Unclear
Uganda (1995)	<p>Very popular process – education seminars, debates, media discussions, and submissions from public.</p> <p>Commission members toured country holding seminars and getting input from key groups.</p> <p>Draft constitution was disseminated for comment.</p>	25,547 separate submissions rec'd through: local councils, essay competitions, seminar reports from districts, sub-counties, and other institutions, op-eds, individual submissions, and group submissions, and position papers.	Commission reported that the draft it produced reflected the collected views of the people.

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South Africa (1996)	<p>Dissemination and promotion of interim constitution by Dept. of Constitutional Affairs and Planning – ads in variety of media and booklets (early 1994).</p> <p>Thematic Committee 1 (Character of the democratic state) – held 56 meetings and processed 3000 public submissions; also held public hearings. Thematic committees also hosted seminars and workshops where they got expert opinion and CSO on particular issues.</p> <p>Jan. – Nov. 1995 awareness campaign; national advertising campaign – TV, radio, newspapers, and billboards; and national survey to assess effectiveness of public awareness and views on constitutional issues</p> <p>4.5 million copies of first draft distributed in tabloid form around the country., eg, via newspaper inserts., door to door delivery, and taxi kiosks</p> <p>On-going through-out the process: CA newsletter (every 2 weeks, 8 pages, 100K distributed through taxi ranks and 60K to subscribers), TV and radio programs “Constitutional Talk” (allowed CS groups to engage multiparty panel on constitutional issues), telephone talk line, internet web site. Weekly radio show reached over 10 million per week</p>	<p>Survey showed 65% of adults reached by awareness campaign between Jan. - April 1995</p> <p>Close to 2 million submissions received</p> <p>Submissions at public meetings, participatory workshops, and public hearings. Feb – Aug. 1995: 26 public meetings held in all 9 provinces (focused mostly on rural and disadvantaged communities) – more than 200 CA members participated. Over 20K people and 717 CSOs attended public meetings</p> <p>7 million copies of final constitution distributed in all 11 constitutionally recognized languages. March 17-21, 1997 – National Constitution Week. Copies handed out with illustrated guides explaining key features and provisions.</p>	<p>March 20 - fourth const. draft contained a detailed study of the submissions made in response to the publication of the first draft.</p> <p>Technical committees organized all submissions and prepared reports for themed committees, which produced a report for the constitutional committee on the major trends in the submissions and whether consensus on an issue was reached.</p>
Eritrea (1997)	<p>Commission members and more than 400 specially trained instructors conducted public seminars in village and town meetings on constitutional issues and related political and social questions. Seven provincial offices and seventy-three locally based committees to assist the public education. Pamphlets in Arabic and Tigrinya and translated international instruments.</p> <p>Sept. – Dec. 1995 – Public debates on proposals. Country divided into 4 regions (plus a fifth diaspora region).</p> <p>Draft approved by NA and then disseminated for public comment – published in 3 languages, distributed throughout country and abroad, published in weekly newspapers in 3 languages and broadcast on radio.</p>	<p>500K reached out of the 4.5 million population.</p>	<p>Standing Committee on Civic Education and Public Debates oversaw the documentation and collation of the questions and points raised at the debates. Submitted summary reports to Executive Committee</p>
Venezuela (1999)	<p>CA had a participatory commission; delivered messages on TV; CA sessions were also televised; no effective civic education program</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>-</p>

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Albania (1998)	<p>The Administrative Center for the Coordination of Assistance and Public Participation (ACCAPP) collected and distributed information, organized polls and civic education, and provided training to practitioners.</p> <p>ACCAPP first held over a dozen forums and symposia for NGO representatives to discuss constitutional issues.</p> <p>Public hearings were held throughout the country. The hearings were open to everyone and aimed at soliciting comments.</p> <p>ACCAPP provided civic education on the proposed constitution in coordination with local NGOs, the Constitutional Commission and Albanian citizens. The educational programs included issue forums, radio programs, pamphlets, newspaper serials, constitutional papers by experts and essay writing contests.</p>	Results of the forums provided the Commission and its staff an outline of the issues that the public considered to be important.	<p>After hearing public comments, the Commission accepted fifty changes affecting over forty-five articles.</p> <p>ACCAPP indexed and organized all public comments according to subject matter.</p>
Fiji (1999)	<p>Three months of public and private hearings before report was written.</p> <p>No civic education was conducted by Commission.</p> <p>No public debate on the report. And very little transparency once report was submitted to Parliament.</p> <p>Civic ed. and consultations also conducted by civil society throughout the 1990s and during the CMP.</p> <p>Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF) held consultations with a wide range of people and made its own submission to the commission.</p>	632 submissions from groups and organizations (over half from religious groups).	Consultation discussed in commission's report but little evidence of direct impact.
Zimbabwe (2000)	<p>NCA provided civic education throughout country and gathered views. First focused on process. Later turned to substance.</p> <p>Thematic committees formed into 100 provincial teams that held meetings in which they received submissions from public. Each provincial team had nine members (one from each thematic committee).</p> <p>Open meetings – public hearings by the thematic committees at provincial locations; written submissions; and submissions via website. Over 5000 meetings in all 57 districts.</p> <p>Nationwide poll and questionnaire.</p>	Commission rec'd oral and written submissions from individuals and groups, advice from constitutional experts, and academic publications.	Unclear. The legislative framework meant that the process and results were subject to the President's discretion.

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East Timor (2002)	<p>UNTAET conducted some civic education.</p> <p>77 commissioners in the 13 districts did civic ed.</p> <p>The thematic committees prepared public hearings and invited representatives of civil-society groups, international organizations, UNTAET, the East Timor Public Administration (ETPA), and the Church to prepare submissions and scheduled their appearances.</p> <p>Debates of CA were broadcast live on radio. There were daily press briefings. Agenda was posted daily.</p> <p>One week of popular consultations after first draft approved.</p> <p>East Timorese Human rights groups also conducted some consultations. They were marginally read by the CA members.</p>		<p>Reports on the inputs were reviewed by political parties and then submitted to the SHC. (Not all inputs were seen by SHC.) Minor changes were made to the draft based on the elite consensus – not the popular inputs.</p>
Afghanistan (2003)	<p>8 regional offices in Afghan., plus 2 each in Iran and Pakistan (refugee populations); members of the const. commission traveled to provincial capitals and visited refugees, holding meetings with pre-selected community/religious leaders, women, business leaders, academics, professionals; plus questionnaires circulated to the general public through newspapers and an outreach campaign; generally kept discussions to vague/general principles, rather than concrete views on key questions.</p> <p>Commission also conducted info. campaign via TV, radio, print materials; explaining process and Bonn Agreement.</p>	<p>Ultimately tens of thousands of comments were logged by commission staff.</p>	<p>Commission produced a report which described the 80,000 completed questionnaires received, 6,000 written proposals, 523 meetings</p>
Iraq (2005)	<p>No systematic civic education</p> <p>UN Office for Project Services did some surveys on federalism</p> <p>Outreach unit worked in an ad hoc fashion, out of cramped space; issued a one-page questionnaire with 6 questions</p>	<p>By Aug. 15, had rec'd approx. 150,000 submissions but mainly from Baghdad; little from Kurds, Sunnis</p>	<p>No known impact; no written submissions reached the CDC before its dissolution</p>

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