

LASER PULSE

Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research (LASER)
Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

Pre-Analysis Plan

The Effect of Social Ties on Engagement & Cohesion:
Evidence from Ethiopian University Students

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ABOUT LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a five-year, \$70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document describes the pre-analysis plan for a USAID funded study on civic engagement and social tolerance in Ethiopia. It is designed to help other researchers verify and replicate our analysis and to increase transparency in the future analysis of our research data. In this study, working with a local NGO, we implemented workshops designed to increase engagement and reduce conflict through structured social contact. Specifically, we used interactive forums to increase civic engagement by connecting youth with politically active peers and elites and providing them with actionable opportunities to participate in civic life. At the same time, these forums deployed inter-ethnic social contact and a curriculum emphasizing common youth and national identities. We will evaluate the impact of these Tolerant Engagement Forums (TEFs) on students' engagement and cohesion using a randomized control trial design.

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Acronyms

Acronym

CACE	Complier Average Causal Effect
CSO	Civil Society Organization
IPD	Initiative for Peace and Development
ITT	Intention to Treat
IWE	Interaction-weighted estimator
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
TEF	Tolerant Engagement Forum
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction & Background

In many countries, youth face unique social and economic challenges. Compared to older generations, youth face significantly worse labor market outcomes (Pastore, 2018; Zimmermann et al., 2013; Nganwa et al., 2015), political and social exclusion (Gupta, 2014; Lin, 2011), and are disproportionately targeted for radicalization and recruitment into violent conflict (Rink and Sharma, 2018; Beber and Blattman, 2013). The prevalence of poor outcomes among youth around the world is especially alarming given that, due to reduced infant mortality in low-income, high-fertility countries, young people are a historically large and rapidly growing share of the population in many places, especially developing countries (Gupta, 2014).

The poor outcomes faced by youth is likely due in part to their low levels of political and civic engagement, especially with formal institutions (Gupta, 2014). Although youth often play a central role in securing political change through mass, anti-regime mobilization (Fluckiger and Ludwig, 2018; Gerling, 2018; Yair and Miodownik, 2016; Goldstone, 2002), they tend to vote, attend community meetings, and join civic organizations at much lower rates than older citizens (Sabu, 2020a). Increasing youth engagement through formal institutions can increase their relative political power and render government more responsive to their needs (Gupta, 2014).

Addressing the issues affecting youth poses two related challenges. On one hand, increasing youth civic and political engagement is an important way to direct government policies to youth issues, which often tailor social and economic policies to the needs of older, more politically active generations. However, it is important that this increased mobilization does not exacerbate existing societal divisions, especially in contexts of ongoing violent conflict. For these reasons, there is an urgent need for interventions that can increase youth engagement while mitigating the potential for the types of conflict often associated with youth mobilization.

Encouraging strategic social ties presents one possible method to accomplish both increased engagement and social cohesion among youth. Recent research suggests that social ties can increase engagement through two mechanisms. First, evidence from diverse contexts suggests that a lack of information (often due to unfamiliarity) about how to engage is a major and disproportionate barrier to youth engagement (Sabu, 2020a; Holbein and Hillygus, 2020). Building social ties between youth and civil society and government elites connects youth with potential sources of information about specific opportunities to participate with civic and political organizations.

Second, social connections to politically active peers can also increase youth participation in political and civic life. A growing body of research demonstrates that new and existing friendships with politically active peers can motivate higher levels of costly political participation (Eubank and Kronick, 2021; Bursztyn et al., 2021). Finally, a large body of evidence suggests that inter-group social contact and structured dialogue can increase cohesion and trust (Paluck et al., 2021). Opportunities to form inter-group social ties and exchange perspectives may be a powerful way to increase inter-group tolerance and reduce support for conflict.

We apply these lessons in Ethiopia, where youth have played a crucial role in a recent political transition but have largely refrained from engaging with formal political institutions (e.g. Sabu, 2020a; Sabu, 2020b; Muluye, 2019) and have a history of mobilizing behind ethnic divisions (e.g. Markakis & Ayele, 1977; Kelecha, 2021). To test the impact of encouraging strategic social ties, we implement a randomized control trial in partnership with Addis Ababa University (AAU), a local peace-building NGO, Initiative for Peace and Development (IPD), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Purdue University, and the LASER (Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) Consortium.

We randomly assign 398 students at Addis Ababa University to one-day¹ interactive forums to increase civic engagement by connecting youth with political and civic elites, providing them with potential sources of information and actionable opportunities to participate in civic life, and politically interested peers, creating a social incentive for political engagement. At the same time, these forums deploy inter-ethnic social contact and a curriculum emphasizing common youth and national identities. We then evaluate the impact of these Tolerant Engagement Forums (TEFs) on students' engagement and cohesion using a variety of attitudinal and behavioral measures.

This randomized impact evaluation will fill key research gaps by linking separate bodies of research on the importance of social ties for both cohesion and engagement among youth. Importantly, this research will clarify how youth development programs can increase civic engagement and mobilization while mitigating the potential for this mobilization to contribute to ethnic conflict, strife, and instability. In addition to providing an opportunity to test the impact of presenting students with opportunities to participate on future behavior, this exercise will also allow us to observe which specific opportunities students in our sample respond to.

Increasing Engagement & Cohesion Through Social Ties

Low youth engagement with civic and political institutions is a common problem around the world. Low levels of engagement likely drive a lack of responsiveness of political institutions to youth needs and poor economic and social outcomes for youth relative to older generations. However, in extremely polarized environments, increased mobilization risks contributing to societal divisions. This risk is especially problematic in contexts of ongoing violent conflict. Fortunately, a growing body of empirical research evaluating the effects of building social ties suggests that building interpersonal connections may provide means to simultaneously increase youth engagement while mitigating societal divisions.

First, social ties can transmit valuable information about how to participate. Using data from the United States, Holbein and Hillygus (2020) find that even in the most high-information political environments,

¹ Random assignment allows us to estimate the impact of the intervention on our outcome, controlling for all pre-treatment differences among potential participants. We use block randomization to ensure balance by gender and minority status. Budget constraints limited the number of attendees to ~300. 398 was the number of randomized invitations required to achieve an attendance of 300.

young people are disproportionately deterred by non-cognitive barriers to participation, including a lack of past experience with participation and a lack of confidence in their political knowledge. Connecting youth directly with individuals with political knowledge and experience presents an important potential way to increase levels of youth engagement.

Similarly, Bursztyn et al. (2021) find that experimentally incentivizing students in Hong Kong to participate in protests caused a long-term increase in participation, suggesting that the initial “leap” into participation is a crucial barrier. Importantly, this increase in future participation was driven by students that formed new social ties as a result of their experience. While encouraging, research has yet to test the impact of directly manipulating social ties to politically active peers and elites as means of increasing engagement. Furthermore, research has yet to test the impact of these ties in a deeply divided society.

In addition to providing information, recent research provides strong evidence that these ties can increase social incentives for youth participation. For example, individuals with more socially active friends face greater social pressure to participate in politics. Eubank and Kronick (2021) analyze metadata from more than 30 billion cell phone interactions in Venezuela to show that individuals with more social ties are more likely to attend protests and sign petitions. Drawing on survey and qualitative data, the authors find evidence for the role of social pressure in driving this behavior.

A separate body of research shows that structured social contact can increase social cohesion (or arrest the deterioration of social cohesion) among members of opposing social groups, even in highly antagonistic and post-conflict settings (Lowe, 2021; Mousa, 2020; Corno, La Ferrara and Burns, 2019; Scacco and Warren, 2018). Specifically, results suggest that collaborative contact increases social ties and cooperation among members of antagonistic groups. However, the effects of contact on cohesion tend to be weaker when group differences are more salient and limited to behaviors toward specific outgroup members rather than changing highly generalized attitudes about the outgroup as a whole (Paluck et al., 2021). Relatedly, dialogue among groups has also been shown to increase social cohesion. For example, structured dialogue around ethnic conflict increased trust among Ethiopian university students from antagonistic ethnic groups but also increased the salience of ethnic identities (Svensson and Brouneus, 2013). Similarly, Paler et al. (2020) show that inter-group discussions in Lebanon between Christians, Sunnis, and Shia resulted in less support for sectarian politics but only when individuals also belonged to the same economic class, allowing for learning about shared preferences along a cross-cutting identity.

Importantly, these results suggest that although contact generally increases cohesion, combining contact with measures to decrease the salience of group differences may strengthen the impact of contact on cohesion. Previous research suggests that emphasizing a broader, ‘superordinate’ identity can reduce the salience of conflicting ethnic identities and reduce discrimination ([Charnysh, Lucas and Singh, 2015](#)). These findings suggest that combination inter-group contact and dialogue focused on problem-solving to address common interests and challenges may be a particularly potent means of promoting cohesion among youths from opposing social groups.

Taken together, these distinct but related bodies of evidence suggest that the multi-faced benefits of social ties may be combined into a single intervention designed to boost youth civic and political engagement with formal institutions while fostering social cohesion. In summary, such an intervention could connect youth with politically active peers to increase social pressure in favor of engagement, connect youth with civic and political elites to provide increase the flow of information about how to participate, and use inter-group dialogue to induce inter-group contact, cooperation around answering questions about common challenges that emphasize common youth identity, and provide a valuable experience that may increased confidence in participants' understanding and ability to contribute to political conversations.

Research Context: Youth, Universities, and Ethnic Conflict

Ethiopia's youth played a central role in the massive political changes the country has undergone in recent years. In the face of brutal state repression, youth groups orchestrated sustained, cross-ethnic protests, ultimately securing a transition of power and extensive liberalization, including the release of thousands of political prisoners and the repeal of the 2009 CSO Law that decimated civil society.²

These successes belie the reality that the political mobilization of Ethiopia's youth has been uneven and has not translated into government policies targeted at addressing youth issues. Despite their role in securing this radical political change, young Ethiopians still face a number of unique socioeconomic challenges, including high rates of unemployment and informality, low access to education, and stark gender inequalities.³

While many of Ethiopia's youth have clearly demonstrated their desire and ability to influence governance in their country, youth participation in politics has often been through extra-institutional channels such as mass protests rather than formal channels like voting, attending community meetings, membership in civil society organizations, or contacting public officials (Sabu, 2020a). Alternatively, others remain disengaged due to a lack of political knowledge or socialization, or a fear of reprisals from opposite-minded peers or local elites (Sabu, 2020a; Gebremariam and Herrera, 2016). Furthermore, youth political mobilization has also been centered around regional and ethnic identities and interests (Yusuf, 2019). Political leaders, including many youth themselves, have mobilized young people around ethnic and regional interests rather than national issues that affect youth broadly.

The political knowledge that facilitates youth participation is often transmitted from generation to generation through a process of socialization, whereby children learn about politics and how to

² Ethiopia: Abiy's First Year as Prime Minister, Review of Freedom of Association', April 4, 2019.

Human Rights Watch,

https://web.archive.org/web/2020*/https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/04/ethiopia-abiys-first-year-prime-minister-review-freedom-association.

³ 'Key Issues affecting Youth in Ethiopia', Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200118174729/https://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-ethiopia.htm>.

participate from their parents (Sapiro, 2004). This represents a problem for youth mobilization in societies emerging from less inclusive political systems (Kitanova, 2020) like Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, older generations often lack experience with political participation and are more likely to transmit fear of engagement to younger generations (Sabu, 2020a; Gebremariam and Herrera, 2016).

Yet, efforts to increase youth mobilization and civic engagement must contend with the current security situation in Ethiopia, which has been characterized by conflict, ethnic tensions, polarization, and electoral instability. Ethiopia's highly federalized system of governance has ensured that much of Ethiopian politics is organized around ethnic and regional identities. Liberalization has facilitated the rise of ethno-nationalist parties in both rural and urban areas, including the federal capital Addis Ababa. The rise of ethno-nationalist political forces poses a challenge to Ethiopian democracy and to the meaningful inclusion of youth in Ethiopia's political development. Youth mobilization has often been explicitly linked to ethnic identities and interests. This highlights the need for any increase in youth participation and engagement to be met with similar efforts to reduce tensions and foster social cohesion.

Nowhere is the ethnically charged nature of youth engagement more apparent than in Ethiopia's universities. Public universities have become a site for ethnically centered conflicts, and violent clashes and protests led by politically mobilized youth have resulted in property destruction, school closings, and even deaths.⁴ Universities are important in that they are settings where many youths come into contact with electoral politics, and where social movements, civil society organizations, and political parties recruit members.

Youth also take on significant roles in university politics, participating in student government and forming civically oriented clubs and associations. Given their importance as sites of political socialization, instability in Ethiopia's universities is particularly troubling for the prospect of peaceful civic engagement. Increasing social cohesion among university students from diverse backgrounds could be a high leverage point to intervene and reduce ethnic tensions both on campuses and in students' communities of origin.

In sum, it is critical that Ethiopia's youth mobilize to advocate for policies that will advance their common interests. The state's recent reorientation towards public dialogue and political organization provides an opportunity for such engagement to take place. However, youth have often been mobilized around distributive conflicts between competing ethnic groups that result in conflict. To secure the long-term interests of Ethiopia's youth, it is important to connect youth to non-violent modes of participation and reduce ethnic and regional tensions. Given their role in political socialization and recent experience with ethnic conflict, the university is a fruitful setting to intervene on these outcomes.

In this project, we implement and evaluate the impact of structured dialogue forums designed to promote youth civic engagement, social cohesion, and economic development. Our "Tolerant Engagement Forums" (TEF) consist of two components. First, we bring together youth and high-level representatives of

⁴ Danish Immigration Service, Ethiopia: Political situation and treatment of opposition, 10 October 2018, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5beadac74.html>

government, parties, and civil society to connect youth to actionable opportunities to participate in formal political institutions and parties, work with prominent civil society organizations, and benefit from ongoing public and private youth development programs. Second, youth participants engage in structured inter-ethnic contact and political dialogue in small, diverse groups.

Intervention and Research Design

Our intervention seeks to increase youth political participation through formal channels while encouraging this participation to target the social and economic policies that affect all Ethiopian youth. In this study, we investigate whether connecting youth with representatives of civil society and government who provide actionable information about opportunities for political participation can increase levels of engagement with formal political institutions and civic organizations. Furthermore, we investigate whether structured dialogue and social contact that emphasizes shared rather than competing interests can increase social cohesion in a conflict setting.

To study these issues, we randomize the participation of Addis Ababa University students in Tolerant Engagement Forums (TEFs). These TEFs consist of two parts. First, students participate in small group meetings with a diverse group of peers where groups are encouraged to discuss the most pressing issues and policies that affect youth wellbeing at the subnational and national level. This component of the intervention seeks to increase social cohesion and decrease the salience of ethnic and regional interests through collaborative social contact. Second, students attend a large group meeting that features prominent members of civil society and government, who discuss existing opportunities for youth to become politically engaged.

While the literature on information and participation suggests ways to increase youth engagement through formal channels, if youth continue to mobilize around regional and ethnic cleavages, this is unlikely to create pressure for governments to implement more youth-oriented policies. To avoid this outcome, we will pair activities aimed at increasing youth engagement with activities that are designed to increase social cohesion among participants and reduce the salience of regional and ethnic cleavages.

The project's intervention consists of three one-day workshops, hereafter referred to as TEFs, held for invited students from Addis Ababa University. We work with an Ethiopian NGO, Initiative for Peace and Development (IPD), to conduct three TEF sessions over days of workshops (June 17-19, 2022). After conducting a baseline survey with 909 AAU students, we randomly invite 398 students to attend one of the workshop days. To ensure that a sufficiently diverse group of students were invited to the event, we block randomize the invitations on gender and ethnic minority identity. IPD then works with students to schedule their in-person attendance on one of the workshop days. A total of 257 students attended one of the workshops (49 on the 17th, 102 on 18th, and 106 on the 19th).

The TEFs consist of multiple sessions. The first session involves panel presentations and discussions about the state of youth civic engagement and current opportunities for increased youth engagement in Ethiopia. These presentations are made by representatives of Ethiopian CSOs and government ministries. Afterward, students are able to engage in discussions and networking with these organizational representatives about opportunities for youth civic engagement. Finally, the afternoon sessions are comprised of student discussions in randomly

assigned groups of approximately 10 people, lead by IPD facilitators. The afternoon sessions are designed for students to discuss several key issues including the challenges and obstacles to youth engagement, opportunities for future inclusion, and causes and potential solutions for Ethiopia’s ethnic conflicts. Students are randomly assigned to a discussion group. Groups are comprised of either 10 or 11 students, with a minimum number of women (3) and ethnic minorities (3).⁵ Above this minimum, we randomly vary the number of women and minorities in each group to assess the impact of greater diversity on outcomes.

Estimation

To estimate the effect of the TEF intervention on the outcomes of interest, we will implement Equation 1 using Ordinary Least Squares. Our primary estimand is the intent-to-treat (ITT) effect of TEF participation on the outcomes of interest. The specification is as follows:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 Z_i + \beta_2 Y_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 a + \gamma X_i + \epsilon \tag{1}$$

β_1 is the coefficient of interest, $Y_{i,t-1}$ is the baseline value for the dependent variable, X_i is an optional vector of pre-treatment control variables, and γ are block fixed effects. Results will be reported with and without the baseline covariates. To account for heteroskedasticity, we will calculate cluster-robust standard errors.

We opt for ANCOVA rather than a difference-in-differences estimator due to the greater statistical power when autocorrelation of outcome variables is relatively low without reduced power when autocorrelation is high (McKenzie, 2012). Because respondents are assigned to treatment arms with the same probability across blocks, we will not use the interaction-weighted estimator (IWE) suggested by Gibbons, Serrato and Urbancic (2019). If attrition is not balanced between the treatment and control arms, we will use IWE.

While ITT will be the primary estimand, we will also estimate a Complier Average Causal Effect (CACE) of TEF participation using two-stage least squares (2SLS), where the randomized invitation is treated as an instrument to participation. Because interest in participation was extremely high in the baseline sample and non-compliance⁶ was often driven by idiosyncratic factors (for example, many invited respondents were not available to participate on the days when a TEF was being held), we argue that this is also a policy-relevant quantity to estimate.

Heterogenous treatment effects

We also have theoretical reasons to expect heterogeneous treatment effects across groups. For example, students that feel more confident participating in dialogue may experience a stronger treatment effect. This

⁵ Under this randomization procedure, there could be up to 8 majority-ethnic group men in a group of 11, though this should be rare.

⁶ In this study, we only observed one-sided non-compliance since no one from the control group attended the TEFs.

may include participants from dominant ethnic groups, male participants, and older students (Year 3). Alternatively, participants from more cosmopolitan backgrounds, such as those of higher socio-economic status⁷ or originally from Addis Ababa or other urban areas, may be more exposed to diversity and opportunities for participation, thereby weakening the effect of the treatment. To estimate heterogeneous effects, we will interact a binary indicator for each group with the treatment variable.

Treatment Intensity

Our research design also allows us to measure two dimensions of treatment intensity. By estimating whether these dimensions of intensity moderate treatment effects, we can answer important questions about the mechanisms driving our results. The first dimension of intensity is the degree of ethnic and gender diversity in the small discussion groups. By randomizing the ethnic and gender composition of each group, we can separate the impact of dialogue generally and inter-group dialogue specifically on ethnic and political tolerance. The second dimension of intensity is the extent to which respondents formed social ties with other participants. To measure this, we ask treated participants to list any social connections they made during the session in the endline survey (Q32). Creating a count variable indicating the number of new contacts the respondent made, we will estimate whether respondents that made more lasting connections during the TEF experience a stronger treatment effect on engagement. This will allow us to distinguish the impact of information about opportunities to participate from the impact of social ties on post-treatment political engagement.

To measure treatment intensity, we will interact our treatment indicator with our measures of intensity. We will also consider causal mediation analysis as an alternative estimation strategy.

Spillovers and Transfer

Much of the research on social contact and dialogue has argue that these interventions can have a broader social impact through the ‘transfer’ of more cohesive beliefs and behaviors through social networks. Specifically, network connections have the potential to amplify the effects of the intervention by producing positive spillovers to individuals that do not participate in programming. However, this important claim has not yet been subjected to empirical scrutiny.

Recent research on social networks provides several examples of how beliefs or behaviors spread among individuals embedded within networks. For example, Paluck, Shepherd and Aronow (2016) examine the effect of a randomized anti-bullying program that changed individual students’ perceptions of social norms around bullying. Perceptions of norms changed more and bullying reduced more at schools where the students who participated had more social connections, compared to schools where participants were less socially connected.

Similarly, information about how to participate in politics may also spread through social networks. Beaman et al. (2021) use a randomized field experiment to investigate how the distribution of information across a village determines how quickly the information spreads. As part of a Ministry of Agriculture campaign to promote a

⁷ We operationalize family socio-economic status by asking whether citizens work in order to pay their tuition.

higher-yield planting technique in Malawi, the authors randomly assign different villages to have information given to a cluster of connected farmers in one corner of the village or to have the information given to unconnected individual farmers spread out across the village. They find strong evidence that information spreads faster when provided to a cluster of connected individuals.

We will estimate whether pre-treatment social connections between treated and control respondents cause spillovers of treatment effects into the control group. At baseline, we asked each respondent to list up to five AAU students with whom they are friends. By matching these names with those in our sample, we will identify control respondents with connections to a treated individual. To estimate spillovers effects, the team will include a covariate indicating whether each individual reported a connection with a treated participant and use inverse probability weights to account for how network location impacts the probability of being connected to a treated unit (Aronow, Samii and Assenova, 2015).

Attrition

To reduce the threat of attrition, the survey firm began contacting respondents immediately upon release of the endline survey.⁸ If attrition is not balanced between treatment and control arms, we will estimate results with and without blocks from which attrition occurred. If attrition occurs across multiple blocks, we will estimate Lee bounds for the treatment effect.

Multiple Hypothesis Testing

To address concerns about multiple hypothesis testing, each hypothesis will be tested using a single index variable that summarizes variation across individual measures. Unless otherwise noted⁹, we will use an averaged z-score index to combine measures of each outcome. Z-scores are constructed by subtracting the mean of the control group from each observation and dividing by the standard deviation of the control group. The averaged z-score index is constructed by averaging the z-scores across component variables. Prior to construction, component variables will be re-scaled to ensure that positive/negative values have the same direction.

⁸ In this context, each hypothesis represents a separate theory explaining the link between specific intervention activities and a specific outcome. Because the objective of this study will be to identify the specific outcomes on which the TEFs have a positive impact rather than to determine whether the TEFs caused improvements across all outcomes, it is necessary to control for the familywise error rate (which the team accomplishes by testing each hypothesis with a single index variable) but not the experiment wise error rate. The team believes that testing hypotheses about specific outcomes rather than broader objectives will produce more useful evidence for the effectiveness of specific activities (that can be scaled) rather than estimating the overall impact of the broader program. For more, see <https://web.archive.org/web/20210412213411/http://daniellakens.blogspot.com/2016/02/why-you-dont-need-to-adjust-you-alpha.html>

⁹ In the event that the individual outcome measures are negatively correlated at endline, we will instead use inverse covariance weighting to maximize the amount of information our indices capture (Anderson, 2008).

Outcomes

This section presents the primary outcomes that will test the effect of the intervention on our two main outcome families: Political Engagement and Social Cohesion and Tolerance. We describe each outcome family that the treatment has been designed to affect and the specific intervention activities designed to target that outcome. The team then presents hypotheses formally specifying the expected impact on each outcome. Primary outcomes are those that will be interpreted as the strongest evidence for each objective and secondary outcomes represent measures that are either less likely to be affected by the treatment or are less directly related to the objective under consideration. The data and methods that will be used to construct outcome measures are under each outcome family. A list of the full text for each question is available in the Appendix.

Political and Civic Engagement

The intervention was designed to target students' engagement with formal political institutions in Ethiopia. To measure the effect of the TEFs on political engagement, we draw on questions measuring varying modes of engagement in the months before and after the TEFs were conducted.

Primary Measure 1: Political Engagement

First, we consider the impact of the TEF on political engagement, which we define as engagement with government institutions and political parties. The intervention aims to increase political engagement by connecting participants with representatives of government agencies. Given the autocratic context, we argue that engagement with government is more difficult and therefore a higher bar for increased engagement.

We also include a behavioral measure of engagement in our survey via Q82. To measure whether treated participants are more likely to engage in contact with formal political institutions, we partnered with several government agencies to allow students to write messages that will be reviewed by officials at each agency. We will assess whether treated respondents are more likely to send a message, more likely to send more messages, or more likely to write longer messages.

- Q13 - Contacted government official (count)
- Q13 - Signed petition (count)
- Q15/16 - Membership in organization associated with political party (likert)¹⁰
- Q82 - The total number of messages sent
- Q82 - The total length of messages sent

¹⁰ These questions ask about current membership and intent to become a member. Respondents who are current members are not asked about their intention of becoming a member, so we combine these two questions into a single measure. If this result is significant, we will explore descriptively whether the result is driven by changes in actual or intended membership.

Primary Measure 2: Civic Engagement

Second, we consider separately the impact of the TEF on civic engagement, which we define as engagement with non-government institutions. The intervention aims to increase civic engagement by connecting participants with representatives of civil society.

- Q13 - Attended a community or student government meeting (count)
- Q13 - Attended an event organized by an NGO (count)
- Q13 - Contacted a community or student government representative to ask for help or make a complaint (count)
- Q13 - Contacted an NGO to ask for help or make a complaint (count)
- Q13 - Worked with or volunteered for an NGO or civil society organization (count)
- Q13 - Participation in demonstration/protest (count)¹¹ \
- Q15/16 - Membership in some other voluntary association or community group (likert)¹²

In addition to these two main indices and behavioral measures, we will test for treatment effects on several secondary outcomes.

Secondary Measure 1: Topic Modeling of Student Participation

In order to get a deeper sense of how students participate in civic life and the specific modes of participation they choose, we use an open-ended question (Q66) that allows students to write text about new ways they have participated in politics since the date of the TEF workshops. We will use a BERT-based natural language processing model to identify clusters of topics mentioned by students and their distribution between treatment and control.

Secondary Measure 2: Efficacy and Obstacles

One mechanism through which contact with civil society and government employees and information about opportunities to participate may result in higher engagement is changes in perceived efficacy either of youth broadly or at the individual level.

Youth and Self-Efficacy

- Q17 - Youth are given adequate opportunities to engage
- Q17 - Youth participation can help bring positive change

¹¹ We include participation in a demonstration/protest even though this may be informal (spontaneous mass protests) or formal (small demonstration organized by an advocacy group). We will present results for each component of the index separately to determine whether this component is driving a significant result.

¹² These questions ask about current membership and intent to become a member. Respondents who are current members are not asked about their intention of becoming a member, so we combine these two questions into a single measure. If this result is significant, we will explore descriptively whether the result is driven by changes in actual or intended membership.

- Q17 - Person participation can help bring positive change

The TEFs also focused on reducing barriers as a mechanism to increase engagement. For example, providing information about specific opportunities to participation, the intervention may reduce search costs or increase interest. Similarly, putting students in direct contact with politically active peers and elites may normalize participation and reduce concerns about potential risks. Because this is a secondary outcome focused mostly on probing mechanisms, we will analyze this outcome as both an index and as individual components.

Obstacles to Engagement

- Q14 - Lack of time or economic resources
- Q14 - Lack of information
- Q14 - Lack of interest
- Q14 - Fear of other peoples' opinions
- Q14 - Fear of other consequences

Secondary Measure 3: Future Plans

While the intervention was primarily designed to encourage immediate engagement with formal institutions, it may also encourage students' interest in or the legibility of careers in the public sector or civil society. To investigate this potential impact, we ask students several questions about their career plans after graduation.

- Q26 - Plan to work in civil society
- Q26 - Plan to work in politics
- Q26 - Plan to work in civil society
- Q27 - Running for political office
- Q27 - Starting an NGO

Secondary Measure 4: Sectarian Engagement

Q15 and Q16 also include the following groups: 1) A religious group that meets outside of regular worship services and 2) A group of people that share the same ethnicity or culture and meet regularly to discuss or advance the interests of the group.

Tolerance and Cohesion

The intervention was designed to increase the intergroup tolerance and social cohesion. To measure the effect of the TEFs on tolerance and cohesion, we draw on questions measuring attitudes and behavior toward political and ethnic non-co-ethnics.

Primary Measure 1: Political and Inter-group Tolerance

To measure the effect of the TEFs on political and inter-group tolerance, we draw on a module of questions

that measures varying aspects of tolerance.

- Q18 - Preference for one party rule (likert)
- Q19 - Preference for political compromise (likert)
- Q20 - Preference for political compromise for own party (likert)
- Q67 - Preference for rule changes by own party (likert)
- Q68 - Support for rule-breaking by own ethnic group (likert)
- Q71 - Support for violence by own party (likert)
- Q69 - Support for violence by own ethnic group (likert)
- Q70 - Support for harassment by own ethnic group (likert)
- Q93 - Support for harassment by own political party (likert)
- Q76 - Support for leaders from other parties (likert)
- Q81 - Trust in students from other political parties (likert)

Primary Measure 2: Social Cohesion and Trust

To measure the effect of the TEFs on social cohesion and trust we draw on a module of questions that measures varying aspects of cohesion. We will use the following variables to construct an index of social cohesion focusing on ethnic tolerance.

- Q10 - Ranking of Ethiopian identity (1–3)
- Q73 - Perceptions of diversity as strength (likert)
- Q22 - Perceptions of unity (likert)
- Q76 - Support for leaders from other ethnic groups (likert)
- Q81 - Trust in students from other ethnic groups

We will also test the effects on two other outcomes that capture similar, though distinct, aspects of social cohesion and ethnic tolerance.

Secondary Measure 1: Perceptions of Discrimination

TEFs provide students with an opportunity to learn from inter-group discourse. We will examine the effect of this discourse on whether respondents believe that their own ethnic group discriminates against others (Q74). We expect that the TEF may cause students to become more aware of the discrimination faced by other groups.

Secondary Measure 2: Preferences for Ethnic Federalism

We also expect that dialogue will give students a chance to hear other perspectives and reflect on governance issues in Ethiopia. We will look at preferences for Ethiopia's states to be drawn according to ethnic homeland boundaries or redrawn based on geographical features (Q23). We expect that the TEF may cause participants to prefer a non-ethnic arrangement for federal states.

Secondary Measure 3: Out-group Social Contact

Finally, we look at the impact of the TEF interventions on out-group social contact. If the TEFs created lasting social ties, inter-group dialogue may have provided opportunities to these ties to be forged between members of different ethnic and political groups.

- Q80 - Frequency of interaction with people from other ethnic groups
- Q80 - Frequency of interaction with people from other political parties

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Appendix I: Hypotheses

Our general hypotheses are the following:

Hypothesis 1 *Levels of political engagement will be higher among participants in the TEF Treatment condition than in the TEF control condition*

Hypothesis 2 *Levels of political tolerance will be higher among participants in the TEF Treatment condition than in the TEF control condition*

Hypothesis 3 *Levels of social cohesion and trust will be higher among participants in the TEF Treatment condition than in the TEF control condition*

Appendix II: Endline Survey



Introduction

Q1. You are being invited to join a research study to better understand AAU students' experiences and perspectives with civic engagement and community participation. During this study, researchers from AAU are seeking your opinions about civic engagement and participation among AAU students. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take a self-administered online survey asking questions about civic engagement, community participation, and related themes. Your participation in this survey should take around 30 minutes. Students that participate will receive a financial compensation of \$5 USD (~255 ETB).

Your participation is completely free, individually determined, and voluntary. At any moment in the study you have the ability to refuse to answer any question or to leave the study entirely. Whether you choose to participate in the study, answer any particular question, or decide to leave the study, you will not face any negative sanctions from the university.

We will follow strict confidentiality guidelines and will not publicly reveal any personal information collected before, during, or after the study. Your name will not be used in any report once the results of the study are published. Your answers to the survey may be cited in reports or publications resulting from the study, but it will remain anonymous and only presented in aggregated statistics. We thank you for your participation!

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact the investigators at:

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Q2. Do you agree to participate in the survey?

Yes

No

Political Engagement

Q11. How often do you get news from the following sources? Every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, less than once a month, or never?

Radio

Television

Print or online newspapers

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or others

Q12. How often do you post or share something about politics on social media?

Every day

A few times a week

A few times a month

Less than once a month

Never

Q65. If you feel comfortable, please provide us the handle for social media accounts that you use. To learn about social media use among AAU students, we may collect data on the frequency of your online activity.

What is your handle? (e.g., @BarackObama)

Twitter

What is your handle? (e.g., @BarackObama)

Facebook

Q13. Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me how many times you've taken any of these actions since June 20th, 2022.

How many times?

Attended a community or student government meeting

Participated in a demonstration or protest

Attended an event organized by an NGO [do not count the TEF event]

Signed a petition

Contacted a government official to ask for help or make a complaint

Contacted a community or student government representative to ask for help or make a complaint

Contacted an NGO to ask for help or make a complaint

Worked with or volunteered for an NGO or civil society organization

Q14. When thinking about these kinds of actions, how often would you say you were prevented from doing them by the following obstacles:

Never

Sometimes

Often

Always

Lack of time or economic resources

Fear of other people's opinions

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Fear of other consequences				
Lack of interest				
Lack of information				

Q15. Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are a CURRENT official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member.

	Official leader	Active member	Inactive member	Not a member
A religious group that meets outside of regular worship services				
A group of people that share the same ethnicity or culture and meet regularly to discuss or advance the interests of the group.				
An organization associated with a political party				
Some other voluntary association or community group (NGOs, NGOs, etc.)				

Q16. Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you INTEND to become a member this academic year. Very likely, Somewhat likely, Not likely, Not at all, Don't know

A religious group that meets outside of regular worship services

A group of people that share the same ethnicity or culture and meet regularly to discuss or advance the interests of the group

An organization associated with a political party

Some other voluntary association or community group(NGOs, idirs, etc.)

Q17. Please read the following statements and consider the extent to which you agree or disagree. Slide the bar to indicate your level of agreement, with 0 meaning that you do not agree at all with the statement and 10 meaning that you completely agree.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The youth in this country are given adequate opportunities to engage in social, economic and political affairs.											<input type="text"/>
The active participation of the youth in the social and political affairs of Ethiopia can help bring positive changes in the country.											<input type="text"/>
Your own personal participation in the social and political affairs of Ethiopia can help bring positive changes in the country.											<input type="text"/>

Q66. In 1 or 2 sentences, please tell us about any new ways that you have participated in civic or political activities since June 20, 2022. This could include any action taken online or in-person to address any issues in your community, your school, your social groups, or your entire country.

**Background**

Q10. Most people have different identities or groups that they identify with. Some Ethiopians identify most strongly with their region, others with their ethnic community, while others identify most strongly with the country as a whole. Looking at the three identities below, please rank them from "1" to "3", where "1" is your most important identity and "3" is your least important identity.

Ethiopian
My Home Region
My Ethnic Group

Tolerance

Q18.

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disagree or agree with the following statement:

Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q19. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement A: Whichever party or group wins elections should be able to pursue the policies they prefer, without needing to compromise with others.

Statement B: Regardless of which party or group wins, it is important to make compromises between the preferences and needs of different groups.

- I agree strongly with A
- I agree with A
- I agree with B
- I agree strongly with B

Q20. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement A: If my preferred party holds power, they should pursue the policies they prefer without compromising with other political parties.

Statement B: If my preferred party holds power, they should make compromises with other political parties.

- I agree strongly with A
- I agree with A
- I agree with B
- I agree strongly with B

Q67. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement A: If my preferred party holds power, they should change rules that treat parties equally so that it becomes easy for us to win future elections.

Statement B: If my preferred party holds power, they should keep rules that treat parties equally even if we might lose future elections.

- I agree strongly with A
- I agree with A
- I agree with B

I agree strongly with B

Q68. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:

If leaders in my ETHNIC GROUP break a few rules to oppose other groups, it's because they need to do it for the sake of the country. Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly agree?

If leaders in my POLITICAL PARTY break a few rules to oppose other parties, it's because they need to do it for the sake of the country. Strongly disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly agree?

Q70. When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary member of your ETHNIC GROUP to harass an ordinary member of another ETHNIC GROUP, in order to frighten them?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Always

Q93. When, if ever, is it OK for an ordinary member of your POLITICAL PARTY to harass an ordinary member of another POLITICAL PARTY, in order to frighten them?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Frequently
- Always

Q69. How much do you feel it is justified for members of your ETHNIC GROUP to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?

- Not at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- Always

Q71. How much do you feel it is justified for members of your POLITICAL PARTY to use violence in advancing their political goals these days?

- Not at all
- A little
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- Always

Social cohesion and trust

Q73. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement A: Communities are stronger when they are made up of people from different ethnic groups, races, or religions.

Statement B: Communities are stronger when they are made up of people who are similar to each other, that is, people from the same ethnic group, race, or religion.

- I agree strongly with Statement A
- I agree with Statement A
- I agree with Statement B
- I agree strongly with Statement B

Q22. Ethiopians are very diverse. They come from different religions, ethnic groups, political parties, and economic and social backgrounds. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement A: Overall, there is more that unites all Ethiopian as one people, than there is that divides them.

Statement B: Overall, there is more that divides Ethiopian into different social and political groups, than there is that unites them as a single group.

- I agree strongly with Statement A
- I agree with Statement A
- I agree with Statement B
- I agree strongly with Statement B

Q23. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

Statement A: In Ethiopia, federal states should continue to be defined based on ethnic homelands.

Statement B: In Ethiopia, federal states should change so that they are defined based on geographical features, not ethnic homelands.

- I agree strongly with A
- I agree with A
- I agree with B
- I agree strongly with B

Q74. Please tell me how often the following happens:

	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
My ethnic group is discriminated against by members of other groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My ethnic group discriminates against members of other groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q76. For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as leaders in student government at AAU, dislike it, or not care:

People from other ethnic groups

People who support a different political party

Q80. Now we would like you to think about your interactions with other students. How frequently or rarely do you interact with:

	Very frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
People from other ethnic groups				
People from your ethnic group				
People who support your political party				
People who support a different political party				

Q81. How much do you trust students:

	Not at all	Just a little	Some	A lot
From other ethnic groups				
From your ethnic group				
Who support your political party				
Who support a different political party than your				

List experiment

Q78. Below is a list of characteristics of students that could hypothetically be in a leadership position in AAU student government. Please tell me how many of these characteristics would make you MORE LIKELY to support that student.

- A student in their fourth year
- A student with AAU leadership experience
- A student with low grades

HOW MANY of these characteristics would make you MORE LIKELY to support a student candidate?

Q79. Below is a list of characteristics of students that could hypothetically be in a leadership position in AAU student government. Please tell me how many of these characteristics would make you MORE LIKELY to support that student.

- A student from the same ethnic group as you
- A student in their fourth year
- A student with AAU leadership experience
- A student with low grades

HOW MANY of these characteristics would make you MORE LIKELY to support a student candidate?

Future Plans and Contact

Q26. Thinking about the work that you would like to do after you graduate, what field do you think that you will work in?

- Public sector or civil service (ex. public university, government ministry)
- Politics (pursuing elected office or working for a campaign or political party)
- Business sector (private for-profit companies)
- Civil society (private not-for-profit organizations)
- I don't know yet

Q27. Since June 20 2022, have you ever thought about taking the following actions?

	Yes, it has crossed my mind	No, I have not thought about it
Running for political office	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Starting a business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes, it has crossed my mind	No, I have not thought about it
Starting a non-governmental organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q82. As part of our efforts to amplify the voices of AAU students in Ethiopia, we have partnered with several important Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and government agencies to share messages from AAU students directly with decisionmakers. **In this section, you will have the opportunity to write anonymous messages that will be reviewed by high-level decision makers.**

These messages may express your opinion on an important issue or recommend specific programs or policies that you think would be beneficial. Please select any CSOs or agencies you would like to write a message to.

- Ministry of Peace
- Ministry of Job Creation
- The Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
- The Ministry of Education
- The Ministry of Finance
- The Ministry of Innovation and Technology
- The Ministry of Planning and Development

Q83. Please write a brief message to the agencies and CSOs you selected.

» Ministry of Peace	
» Ministry of Job Creation	
» The Ministry of Women and Social Affairs	
» The Ministry of Education	

» The Ministry of Finance

» The Ministry of Innovation and Technology

» The Ministry of Planning and Development

Networks

Q32. Now please think back to your participation in the TEF workshop. Did you make any **NEW friends or connections** there? Please provide the first and last names, if any, of other TEF attendees that you have made a connection with since attending the workshop. We will not contact these individuals, and this information will remain confidential.

Friend 1

Friend 2

Friend 3

Direct Question Version for List Experiment

Q97. Imagine you are considering candidates for a hypothetical leadership position in AAU student government. Would you be MORE LIKELY to support a student with the following characteristic?

	No	Yes
A student from the same ethnic group as you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A student in their fourth year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Decentralization conjoint

Q84. Now, we would like you to take part in a small “thought experiment”. Imagine that, hypothetically speaking, the federal system of Ethiopia were to be redesigned from scratch, and public responsibilities had to be assigned either to the central government or to the states. Again, this is purely a hypothetical.

Consider two hypothetical proposals for how the federal government should be designed, below. **If you had to live in one of these two hypothetical governments, which would you choose? Even if you are not sure, please make your best guess.**

Q92.

Government A		Government B
	Public jobs	
	Security forces	
	Cultural policy	
	Borders	

Which Government do you prefer?

Government A Government B

Q96. Now here is a new pair of hypothetical governments. If you had to live in one of these two, which would you choose? Even if you are not sure, please make your best guess.

Q94.

Government A		Government B
	Public jobs	
	Security forces	
	Cultural policy	
	Borders	

Which Government do you prefer?

Government A Government B

Dialogue conjoint

Q107. You may have heard about the ongoing National Dialogue Commission, which was created by Ethiopia's federal parliament to facilitate "an inclusive dialogue and reconciliation process that would heal wounds, build a consensus on key issues and help the country to solve its complex problems".

We are interested in learning about how citizens want the dialogue to be conducted. Imagine that Parliament is choosing between two hypothetical plans for the National Dialogue. These plans share the same structure and goals, but differ in important ways. Specifically, these two plans will differ on which groups will send representatives, how representatives are selected, and the scope of the changes under consideration.

Q108.

	Plan A	Plan B
Group representatives are:		
Includes the military?		
Includes traditional leaders?		
Includes religious representatives?		
Includes civil society organizations?		
Includes international mediators?		
Will consider changes to Ethiopia's constitution?		
Accountability mechanism?		

Which of these two plans would you want Parliament to choose? Even if you are not sure, make your best guess.

Plan A Plan B

Borders note

Q85. Now, we would like you to take part in a small “thought experiment”. Imagine that, hypothetically speaking, there was a plan to redraw the borders of the states of Ethiopia. Again, this is purely a hypothetical.

Border dispute

Q86. imagine that there is a territory on the border of **your home region** and other states, and there is a dispute about which state should own that territory. Imagine that the following two options are being considered to resolve the dispute:

- Option 1: Accept an agreement in which **your home region** wins 1/3 of the disputed land.
- Option 2: Pursue a policy where **your home region** has a 1 in 3 chance of winning the entire disputed territory and a 2 in 3 chance of winning none of this territory.

Which of the two options would you prefer?

- Option 1
- Option 2

Q87. imagine that there is a territory on the border of **your home region** and other states, and there is a dispute about which state should own that territory. Imagine that the following two options are being considered to resolve the dispute:

- Option 1: Accept an agreement in which **your home region** loses 2/3 of the disputed land.
- Option 2: Pursue a policy where **your home region** has a 1 in 3 chance of keeping the entire disputed territory and a 2 in 3 chance of losing all of this territory.

Which of the two options would you prefer?

- Option 1
- Option 2

Q88. imagine that there is a territory on the border of **your home region** and other states, and there is a dispute about which state should own that territory. **This territory has a large number of people from your region.** Imagine that the following two options are being considered to resolve the dispute:

- Option 1: Accept an agreement in which **your home region** wins 1/3 of the disputed land.
- Option 2: Pursue a policy where **your home region** has a 1 in 3 chance of winning the entire disputed territory and a 2 in 3 chance of winning none of this territory.

Which of the two options would you prefer?

Option 1

Option 2

Q89. imagine that there is a territory on the border of **your home region** and other states, and there is a dispute about which state should own that territory. **This territory has a large number of people from your region.** Imagine that the following two options are being considered to resolve the dispute:

- Option 1: Accept an agreement in which **your home region** loses 2/3 of the disputed land.
- Option 2: Pursue a policy where **your home region** has a 1 in 3 chance of keeping the entire disputed territory and a 2 in 3 chance of losing all of this territory.

Which of the two options would you prefer?

Option 1

Option 2

Q90. imagine that there is a territory on the border of **your home region** and other states, and there is a dispute about which state should own that territory. **This territory has substantial natural resources.** Imagine that the following two options are being considered to resolve the dispute:

- Option 1: Accept an agreement in which **your home region** wins 1/3 of the disputed land.
- Option 2: Pursue a policy where **your home region** has a 1 in 3 chance of winning the entire disputed territory and a 2 in 3 chance of winning none of this

territory.

Which of the two options would you prefer?

- Option 1
- Option 2

Q91. imagine that there is a territory on the border of **your home region** and other states, and there is a dispute about which state should own that territory. **This territory has substantial natural resources**. Imagine that the following two options are being considered to resolve the dispute:

- Option 1: Accept an agreement in which **your home region** loses 2/3 of the disputed land.
- Option 2: Pursue a policy where **your home region** has a 1 in 3 chance of keeping the entire disputed territory and a 2 in 3 chance of losing all of this territory.

Which of the two options would you prefer?

- Option 1
- Option 2