Increasing Youth Engagement While Mitigating the Potential for Conflict in Ethiopia

LASER PULSE/USAID Funded Project

Lead Institute: Addis Ababa University

ERT Lead Partner Institute: Initiative for Peace and Development

Dissemination Workshop with Stakeholders

29 March 2023

The Hub Hotel

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

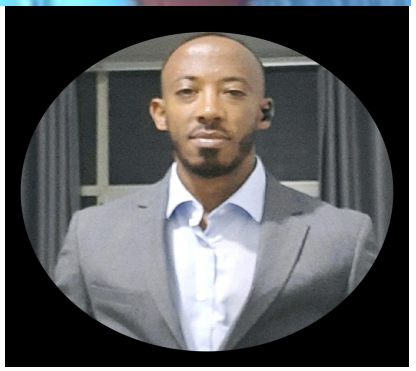
About LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a $70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID interest countries. A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,000+ researchers and development practitioners in 74 countries.

Part I: Introduction

Research team; Description of the project; Design and process; Research outputs; and ERT products

1.1. Research Team



- Mesele Mengsteab, PhD – PI
  Assistant Professor in Social Work & Social Development
  School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University.
  Email: mesele.mengsteab@aau.edu.et
- Fitsum Hailu – ERT Lead
  Executive Director, Initiative for Peace and Development (IPD).
  Email: fitahk@gmail.com; ipdethiopia@gmail.com
- Juan F. Tellez, PhD – Co-PI
  Assistant Professor in Political Science
  University of California, Davis.
  Email: juan.f.tellez@gmail.com

1.1. Research Team

- Sewareg Adamu, MA – Co-PI
  PhD Fellow in Development Studies
  Addis Ababa University
  Email: haregadd@gmail.com
- Jeremy Springman, PhD – Co-PI
  Senior Research Associate
  DevLab@Penn, University of Pennsylvania
  Email: jspr@sas.upenn.edu
- David Dow, PhD – Co-PI
  Research Scientist, University of Arizona.
  Email: ddow@arizona.edu

1.2. Description of the Project

1.2.1. Context: Youth and Conflict in Ethiopia

- Ethiopia's youth played a central role in the massive political changes,
- Youth groups orchestrated sustained, cross-ethnic protests, ultimately securing a transition of power and extensive liberalization,
- 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 related issues.

1.2. Description of the Project

- Despite their role in securing this radical political change young Ethiopians still face a number of unique:
  - ✔ Socio-economic challenges, including high rates of unemployment and informality,
  - ✔ Low access to education, and stark gender inequalities.
- Generally, the main research problematic/issue behind designing this project include:
  - ✔ The youth's unique social and economic challenges,
  - ✔ Low levels of engagement with formal political and civic institutions, and
  - ✔ Mobilization around ethnic identity rather than youth development, empowerment and leadership policies.

1.2.Description of the Project

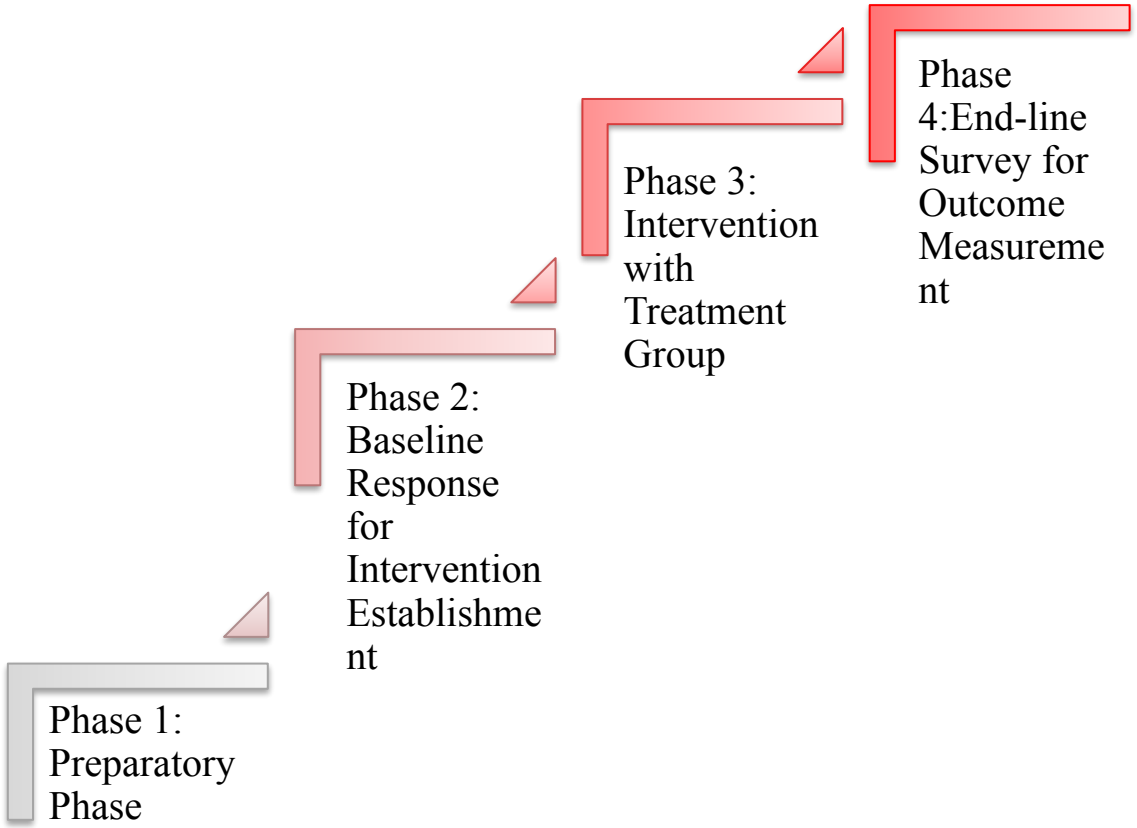
- Therefore, designing this project was motivated believing that:
  - ✔ Increasing and improving youth participation in civic and political life is crucial for fostering inclusion amongst a large share of the Ethiopian population.
- This is primarily on the assumption that:
  - ✔ Increasing youth civic engagement is a necessary step:
    - to help the government and state actors be more responsive to the social and economic needs of youth, and
    - to secure the role of youth in shaping the political development of their country.

1.2. Description of the Project

1.2. Objective:

- Cognizant of the research context explained above, the ultimate objective of the research was:
  - ✔ To implement and rigorously evaluate the impact of structured dialogue forums (TEF) designed to promote youth civic engagement, political participation and social cohesion.

1.3. Design and Process



- The entire process of the project was designed in a way it took place over four important phases assuming that inputs from the first phase would inform the design of activities in the next phase.
- Therefore, the process was phase-specific in the sense that some activities of the first phase had to be completed prior to initiating any second phase activities.

1.3. Design and Process

- **Activities in Each Phase**:
  - ***I. Phase One: Preparatory Phase***
  - ✔ Tool development
  - ✔ Recruiting AAU student clubs in consultation with the office of the Dean of Students
  - ✔ Conducting 4 FGD sessions with 31 AAU student club members
- The FGDs were to collect qualitative data from the student clubs and associations.
- The purpose was for drawing lessons, from the experiences of the students who already have high levels of civic engagement, to inform both:
  - ✔ The design of the TEF curriculum guide, used as an intervention with the treatment groups, and
  - ✔ The measurement of key concepts and outcomes of the baseline survey, conducted with 1000 randomized AAU students.

1.3. Design and Process

- The FGD checklist was developed consisting of questions grouped into three parts.
  - ✔ The first part of the checklist dealt with questions about the functions and objectives of the clubs.
  - ✔ The second part covered the experiences of the club members in civic engagement and political participation and related barriers.
  - ✔ The third part with questions about TEFs and potential issues which the students think are important to be included in and are sensitive to be excluded from the TEF events.

II. Phase Two: Baseline Response for Intervention Establishment

- ✔ Baseline and endline survey tool development
- ✔ Organizing disaggregated dataset of over 10,000 AAU undergraduate students
- ✔ Securing IRB approval
- ✔ Power analysis for sampling 1000 students for the baseline survey
- ✔ Conducting an online baseline survey with 1000 students

1.3. Design and Process

III. Phase 3: Intervention with Treatment Group

- ✔ Designing the TEF events as intervention
  - The development of TEF curriculum and organizing the TEF events
  - The TEF was designed in a way it consisted of two important scenarios.
    - The first scenario aimed at creating large-size plenary-type group sessions.
    - The second aimed at creating small-size sessions into which the youth participants breakout to engage in a more structured inter-ethnic contact and political dialogue.
  - The overall target of the two scenarios was to connect the youth to formal political institutions and prominent civil society organizations for actionable opportunities and then benefit from ongoing public and private youth development programs.

1.3. Design and Process

IV. Phase 4:End-line Survey for Outcome Measurement

- ✔ Endline survey for outcome measures
- ✔ Primary outcome measures expected of the intervention included:
  - Increased political and civic engagement;
  - Increased social cohesion and tolerance;
  - Peer ties encouraged participation;
  - Social ties provided information and opportunities; and
  - Cross-cutting ties and dialogue increased cohesion and tolerance.

1.4. Research Implementation

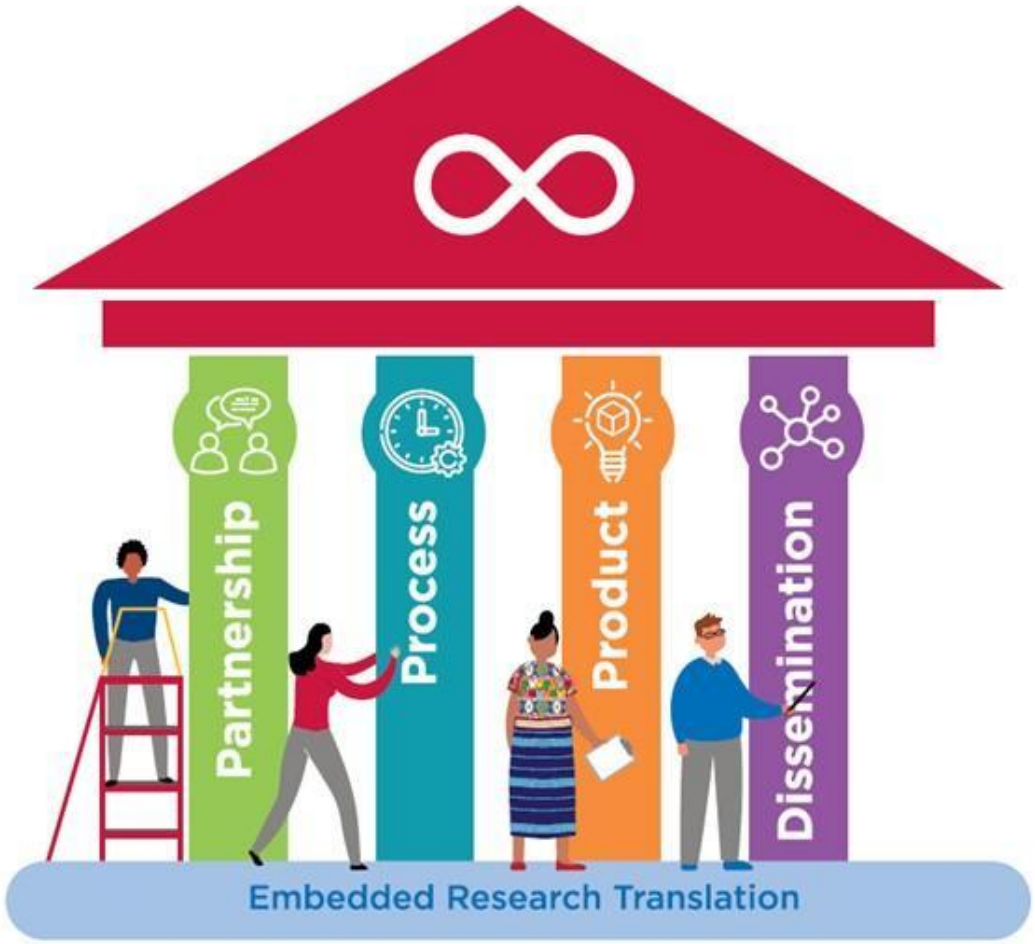
1. *FGD Sessions –*
2. *Qualitative Data, Audio and Transcription*
3. *Baseline Survey Instrument and Data*
4. *Tolerant Engagement Forums*
5. *Public Presentation – LASER-Pulse R4D Workshop*
6. *End-line Survey Instrument and Data*
7. Intermittent Events – Quarterly meetings with USAID Mission
8. Agenda – Monthly Meetings with LASER-Pulse Team and Weekly Meetings of the Research Team

Tolerant Engagement Forum: Intervention with Treatment Groups

Embedded Research Translation (ERT) MODEL

- Embedded Research Translation (ERT)-An interactive co-design process among academics, practitioners, and other stakeholders in which research is intentionally applied to a development challenge (LASER PULSE Definition)
- It has 4 pillars

THE ERT PILLARS



Definition of Tolerant Engagement Forum (TEF)

- TEF is a custom generated forum that brings youth and issue representatives together for creating platforms for social contact and hosting opportunities to engage socially, politically and economically.
- It is a tool of intervention and evaluation designed by IPD and researchers at Addis Ababa University, that aims to tackle these issues — increasing youth civic engagement *without* raising tensions

TEF participants after attending a full day event

TEF Events …

Students Signing up to engage with issue representatives

Issue representatives presenting their areas of engagement

B. TEF Events

- 300 Students randomly selected to receive an invitation to participate in a TEF event (30 % are women and the rest 70 Men), 257 attended.
- Conducted in 3 separate days with at least 80 participants per day on average
- TEF events have two sessions.
- 1st-Issue Representatives, Panel Discussions and Job fair
- 2nd - Students divided into groups of 10 have discussed on topics related to civic engagement in economic, social issues and potential challenges they face.

Issue Representatives

GOs

- The Ministry of Peace
- The Ministry of Job Creation
- Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO)

CSOs

- Ethiopian Civil Society Forum
- Vision Ethiopia Congress for Democracy (VECOD)
- Safelight Initiative
- Model African Union-Ethiopia

Clubs

- Rotract Club of Lewit
- Rotract Club of Haleta

…ERT-MODEL APPLICATION IN THIS PROJECT

- Partnership- IPD Created partnership with researchers at Addis Ababa University, in addition to CSOs, GOs and private sectors
- Process- Invitations to IRs, Students, Conducting TEF
- Product- TEF replication Manual, The TEF replication Video
- Dissemination- Disseminating Research findings and ERT tools.

Lessons Learned

- Better understanding of the importance of researcher-practitioner partnership reflected
- The TEF model brought unique and practical testing method to a research
- The process of TEF events helped in enhancing partnership engagements among IPD-GOs, IPD-CSOs, …

TEF Impressions

- Opened a floor for students to openly discuss and challenge each other on different opinions in a peaceful manner
- Questions raised in the TEF events helped students to simulate and recommend policy options (A greater sign of engagement)
- New to many students to have gathered in such settings and engage with different stakeholders (Higher interest of engaging more reflected)

Thank You!

Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial at Addis Ababa University

Motivation

- Youth face unique social and economic challenges
- Low levels of engagement with formal political and social institutions
- Mobilization on ethnic/regional identity

Objectives

- Increase engagement with formal political and social institutions
- Increase social cohesion and tolerance

Intervention:

- 1-day Tolerant Engagement Forums (TEFs)
- Interaction with representatives from government and civil society
- Create social ties among diverse, politically-interested students
- Structured dialogue emphasizing common challenges

Why a 1-day intervention?

- Low-cost interventions can be scaled to benefit more people
- Recent research suggests short-term interventions can have a lasting impact

Research on engagement:

- Lack of experience, information prevents youth engagement
- Social ties encourage engagement

Research on social cohesion and tolerance:

- Dialogue, perspective-taking can increase cohesion
- Short exercises can cause lasting change

Impact Evaluation Design:

- Identify sample of students interested in attending a TEF
- Randomly assign TEF invitations
- Measure outcomes for both TEF participants and “control” group
- Compare changes in outcome between TEF participants relative to "control“

Evaluation:

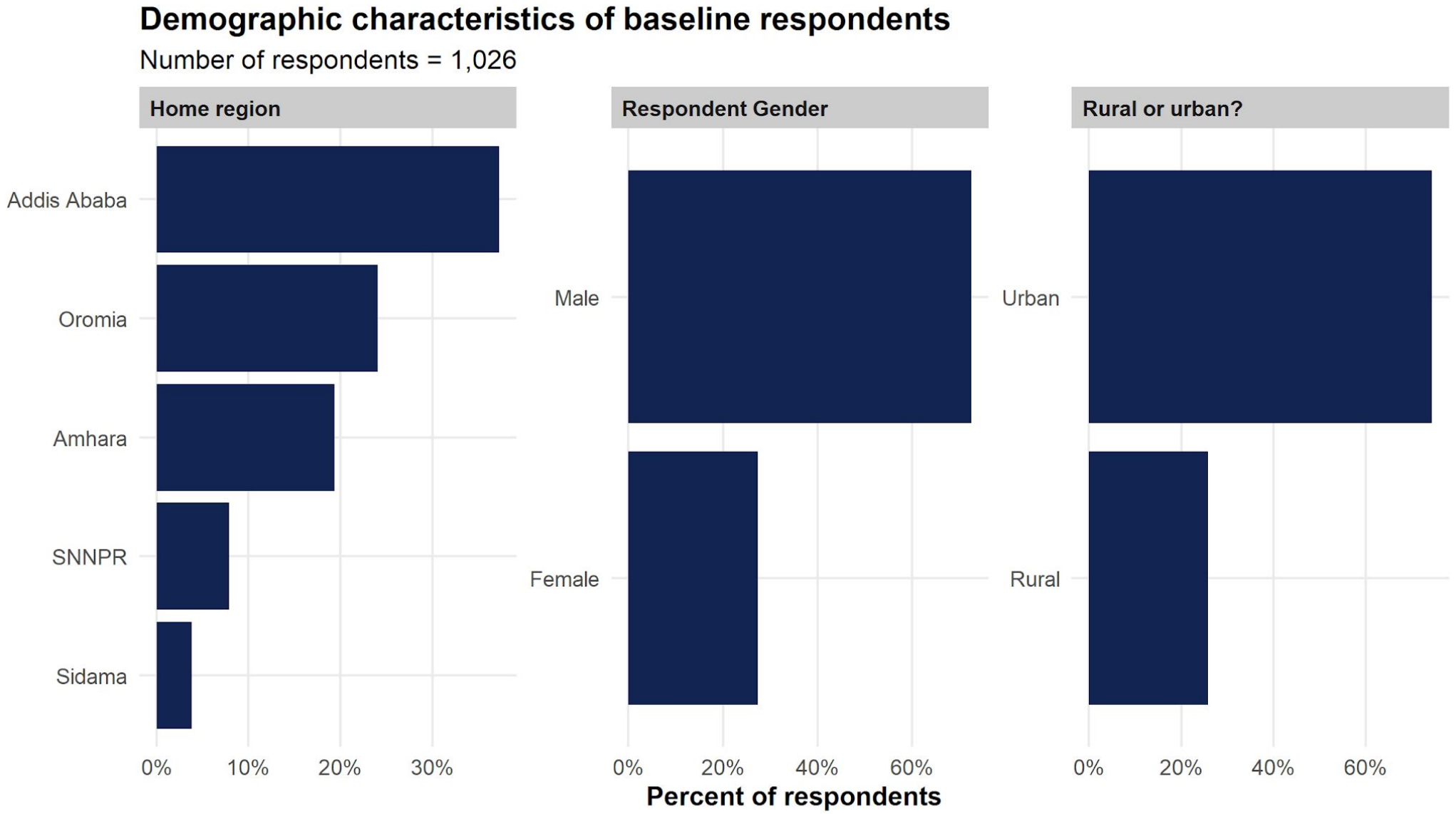
- Self-administered online survey (cheap; reduces bias)
- Blocking on gender, ethnic background
- All measurement and estimation pre-registered with OSF

Timeline:

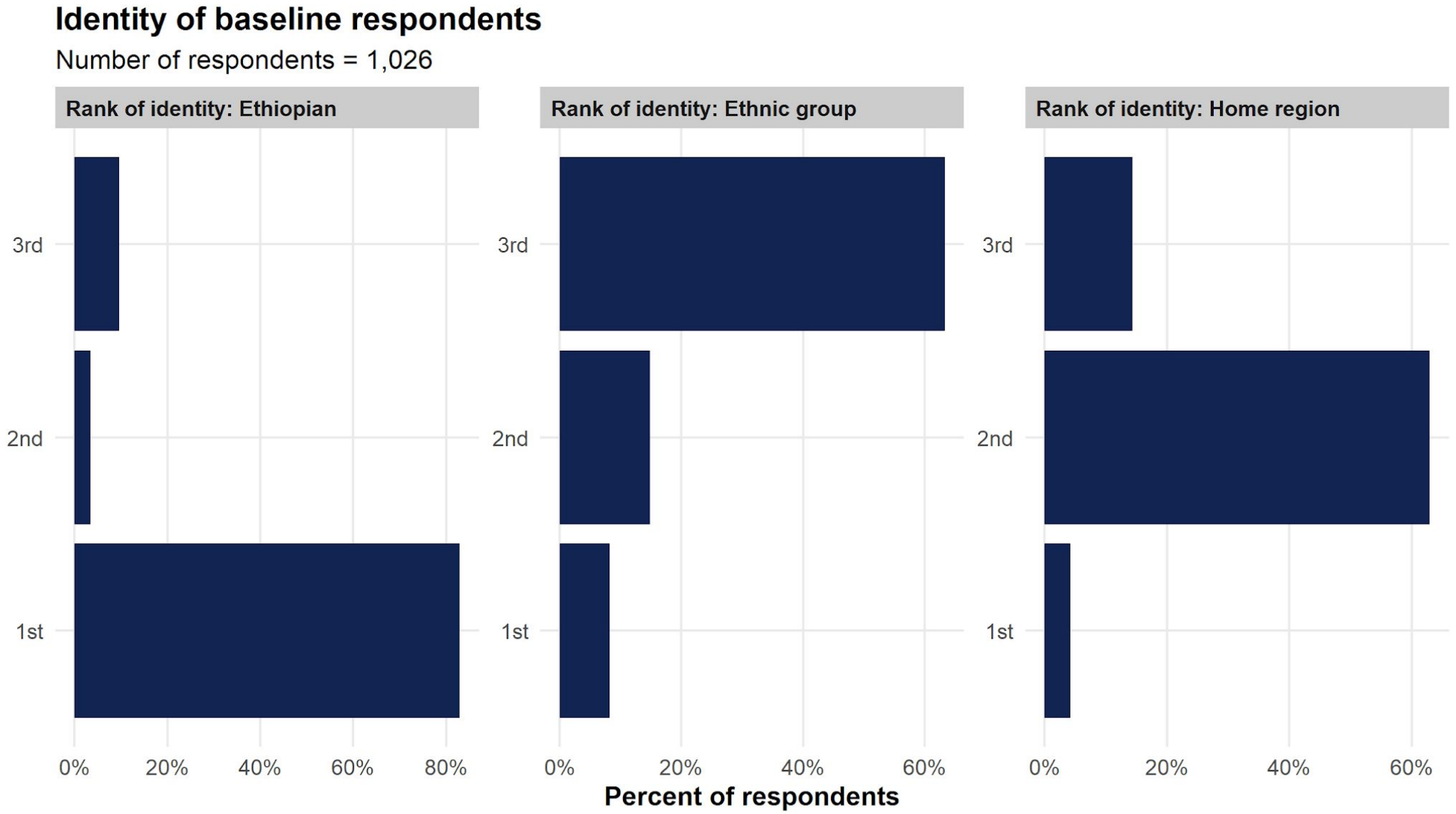
- Baseline survey: May-June
- TEF events: June
- Endline Survey: October-November

Sample Size:

- Baseline Survey: n=989
- Interested: n=909
- Invite: n=380
- Attended: n=257
- Endline Survey: n=823

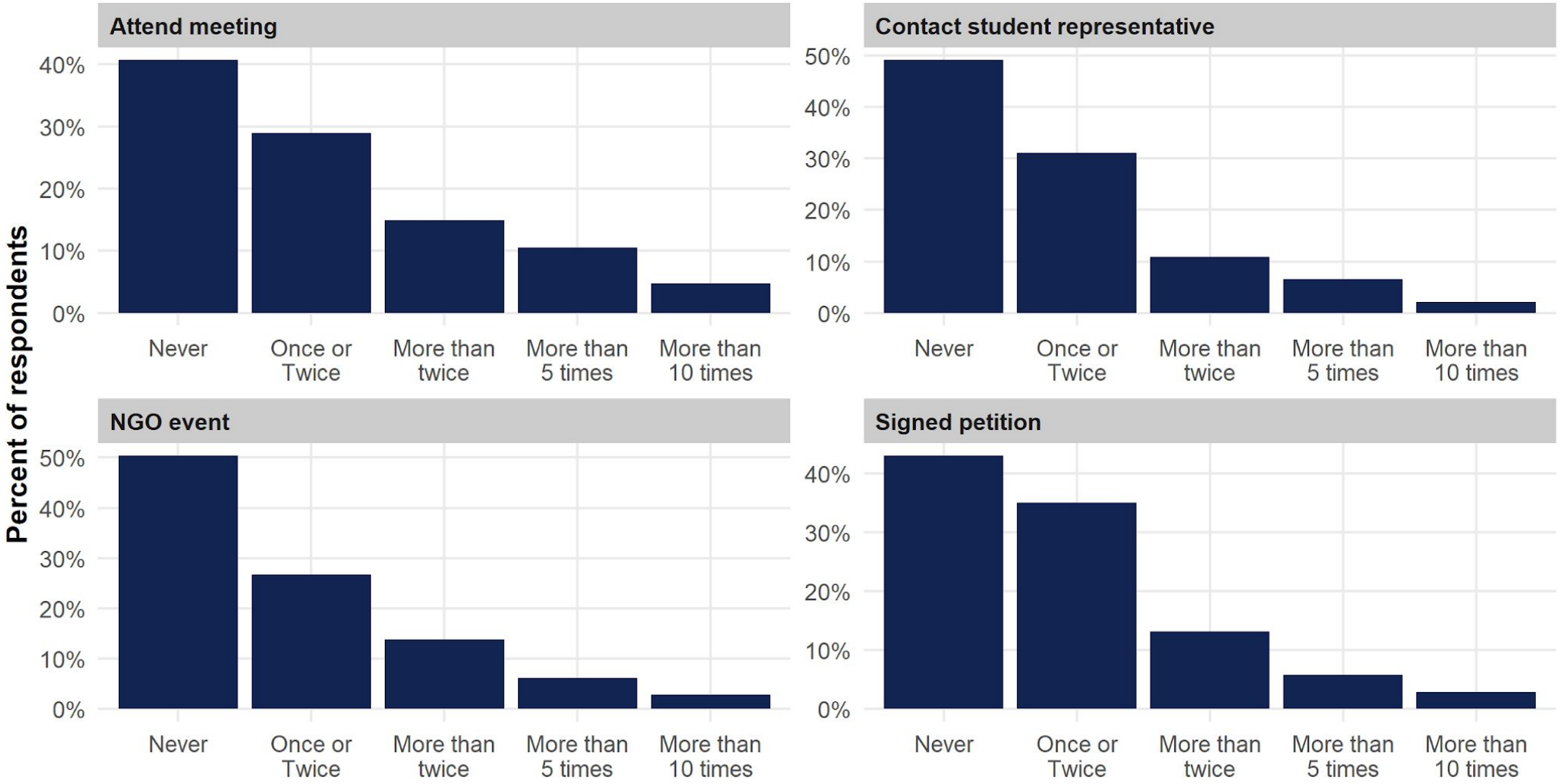


Note: home region only displays top five categories by size.


Identity of baseline respondents
Number of respondents = 1,026
Rank of identity: Ethiopian
Rank of identity: Ethnic group
Rank of identity: Home region
3rd
2nd
1st
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
Percent of respondents
Note: ethnic group only displays top five categories by size.

How do youth participate?

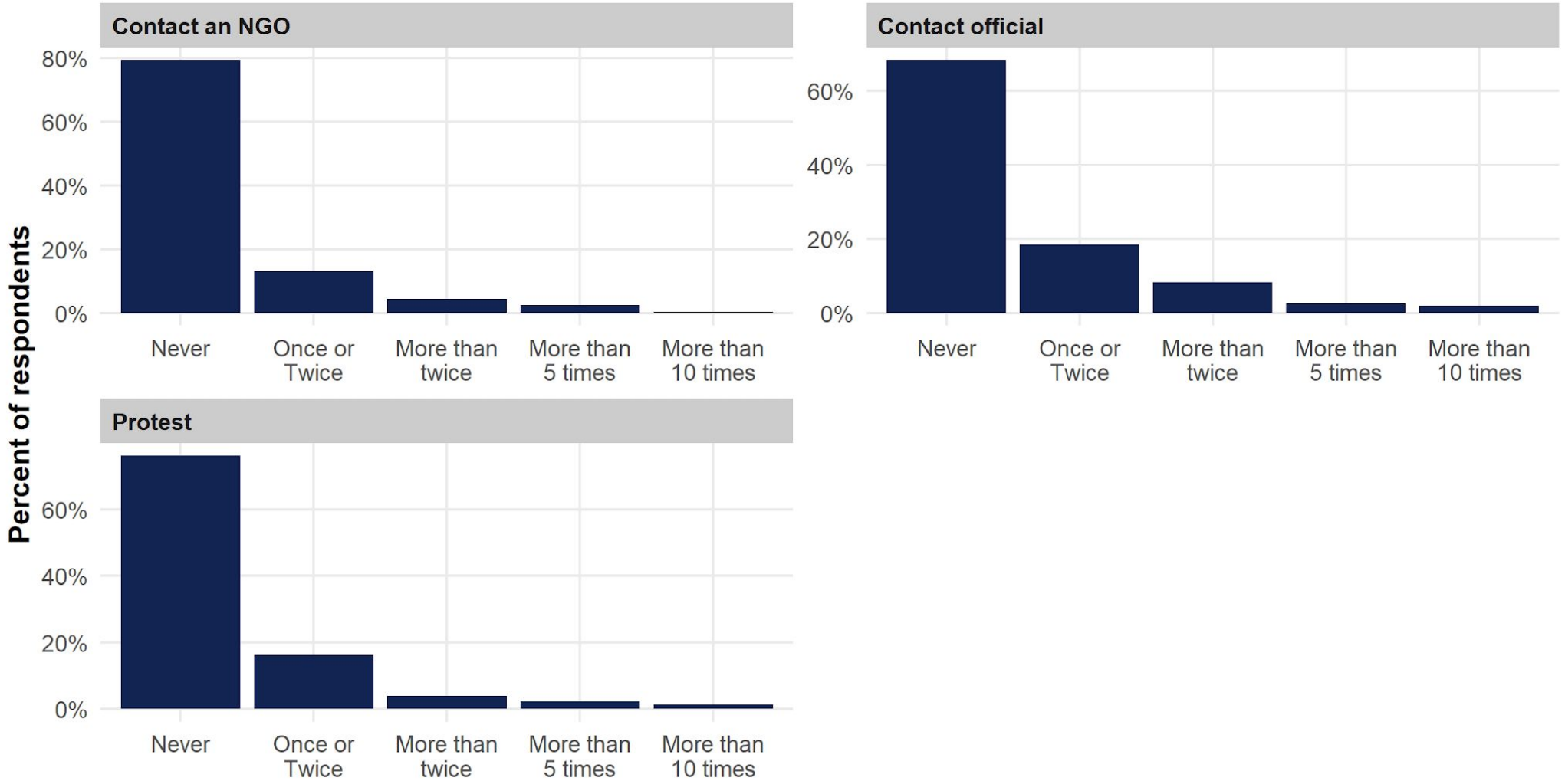
Number of respondents = 1,024



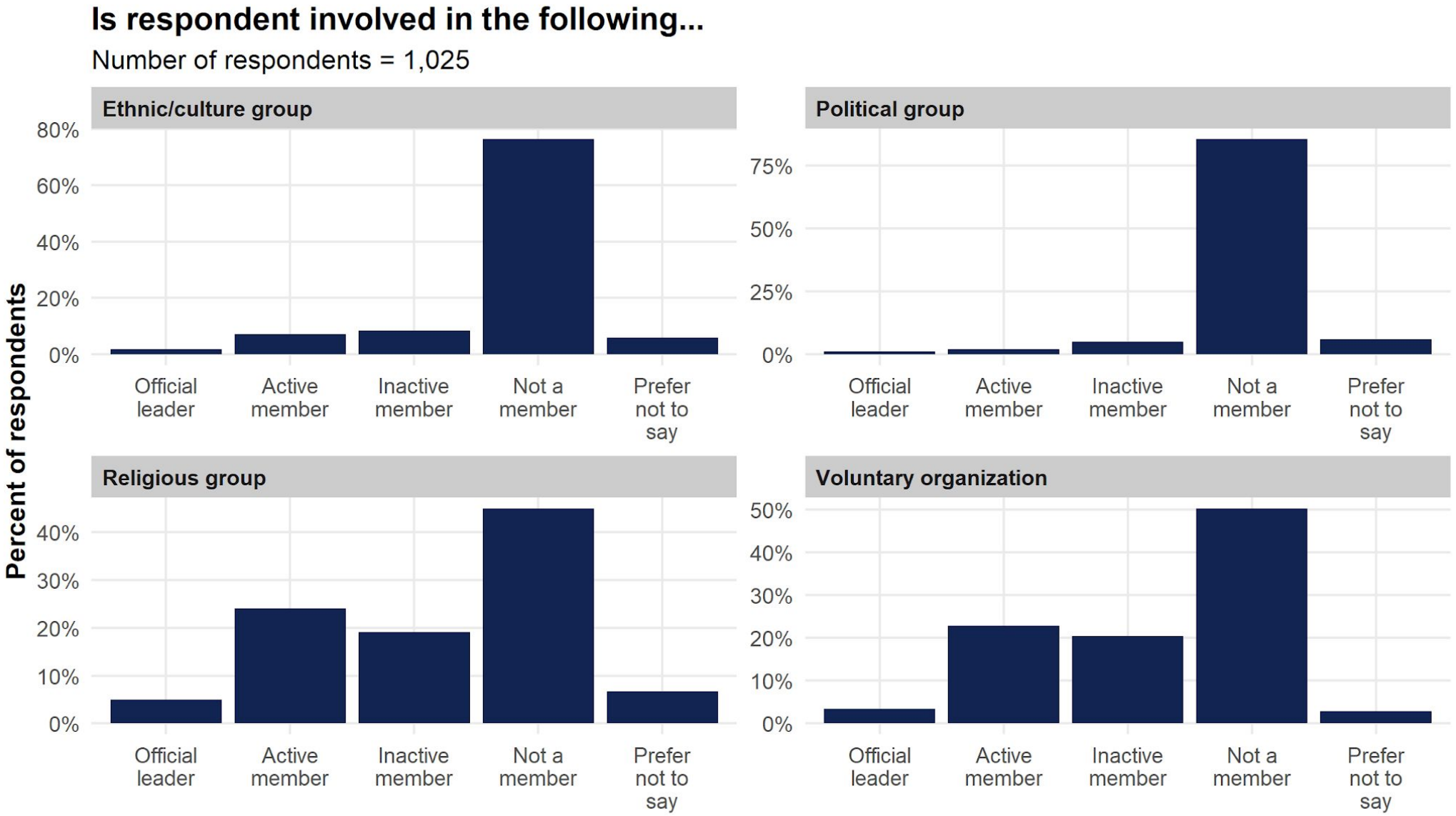
See paper for full question wording

How do youth participate?

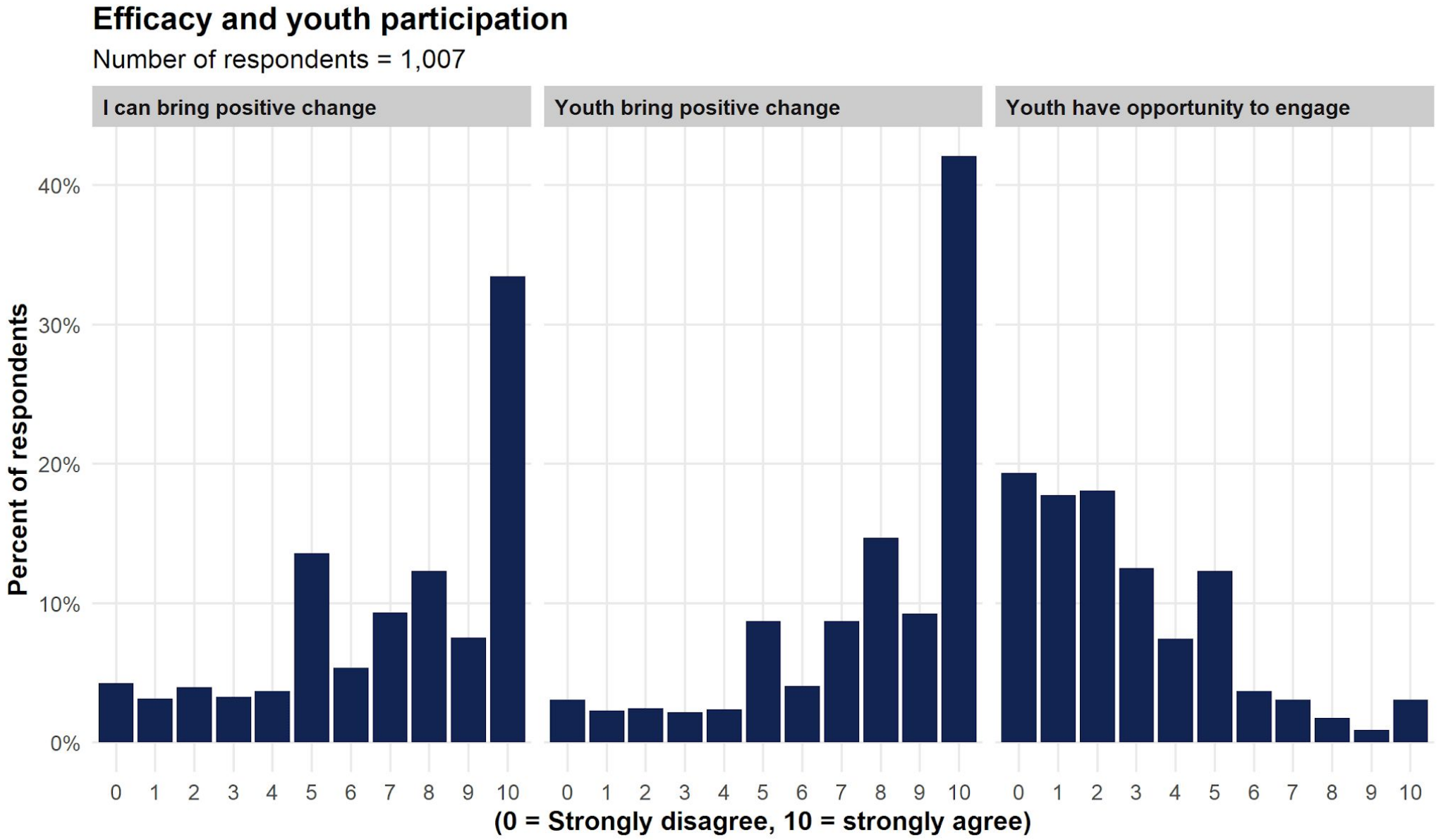
Number of respondents = 1,024



See paper for full question wording



See paper for full question wording

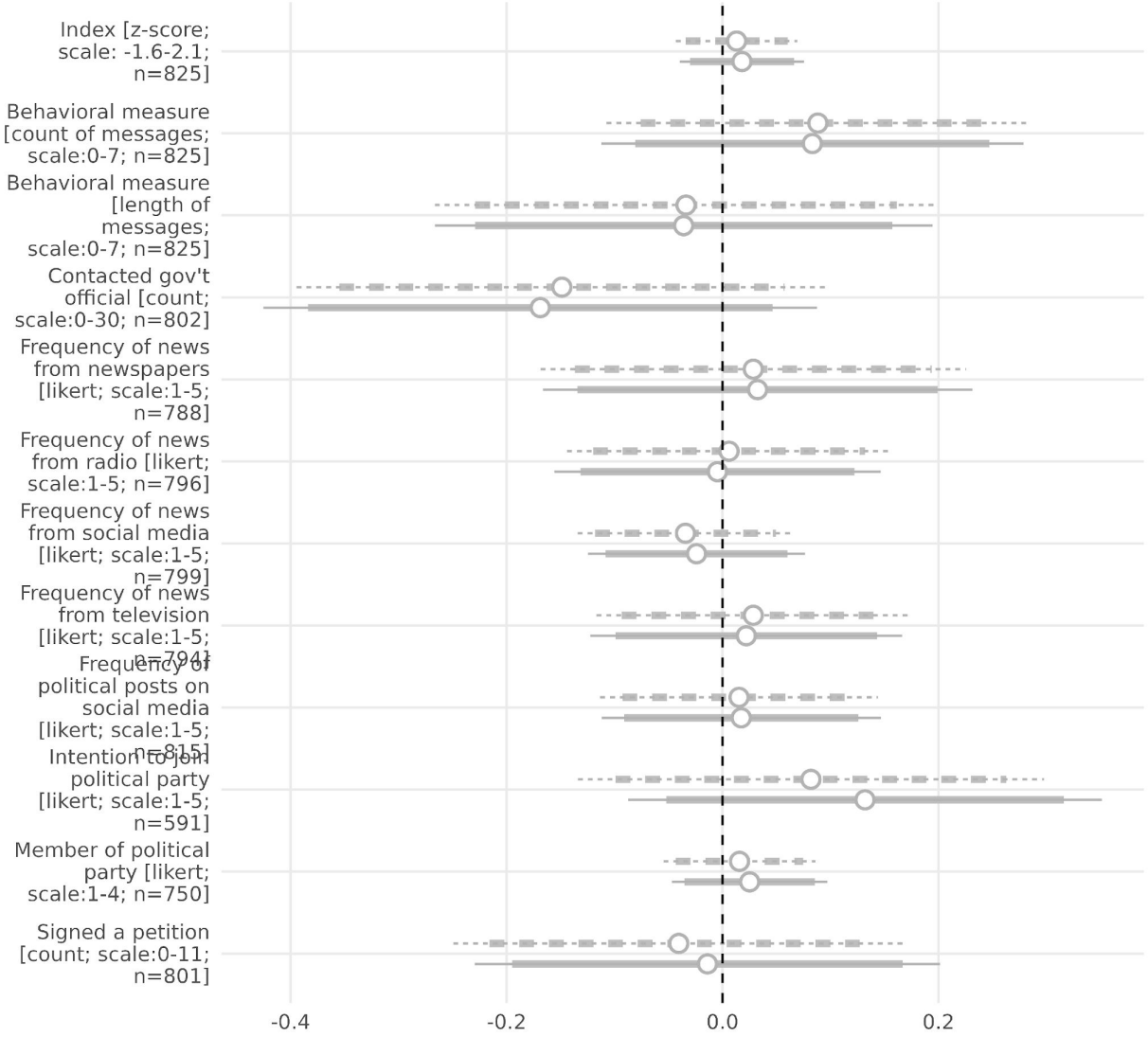

Efficacy and youth participation
Number of respondents = 1,007
I can bring positive change
Youth bring positive change
Youth have opportunity to engage
Percent of respondents
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(0 = Strongly disagree, 10 = strongly agree)

Outcome Family	Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
Outcome Family 1: Tolerance & Social Cohesion	1. Political/ethnic tolerance 2. Social cohesion	1: Perceptions of discrimination 2. Preferences for ethnic federalism 3. Out-group social contact
Outcome Family 2: Political and Civic Engagement	1. Political engagement 2. Civic engagement	1. Sectarian engagement 2. Efficacy 3. Obstacles 4. Future career plans

Outcome Family	Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
Outcome Family 1: Tolerance & Social Cohesion	1. Political/ethnic tolerance 2. Social cohesion	1: Perceptions of discrimination 2. Preferences for ethnic federalism 3. Out-group social contact
Outcome Family 2: Political and Civic Engagement	1. Political engagement 2. **Civic engagement**	1. **Sectarian engagement** 2. Efficacy 3. Obstacles 4. **Future career plans**

Effect of TEFs on political engagement

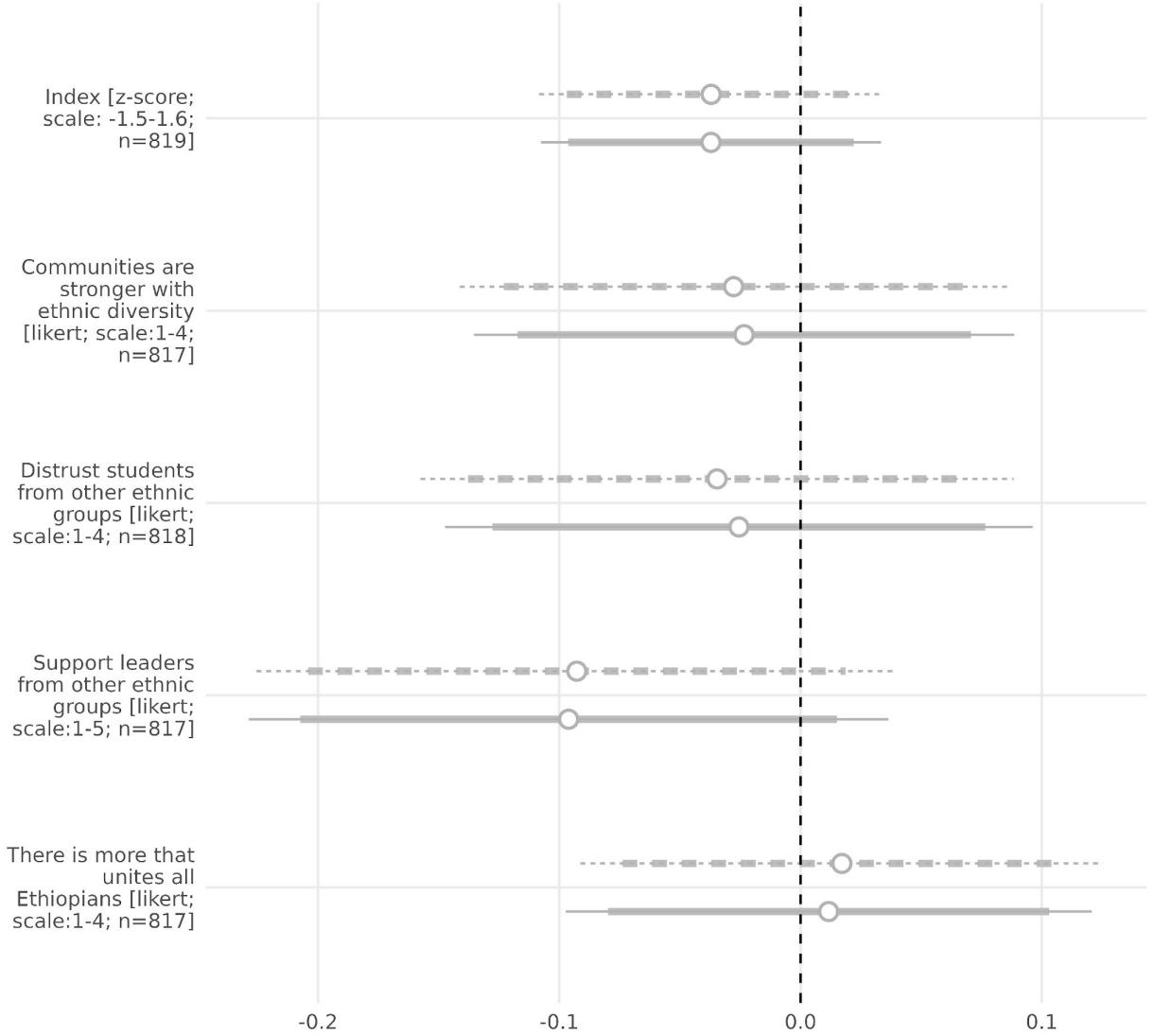
Intent-to-treat effect estimate of TEF participation.



Note: estimates are on the scale of the outcome variable, dashed lines include covariates.

Effect of TEFs on social cohesion

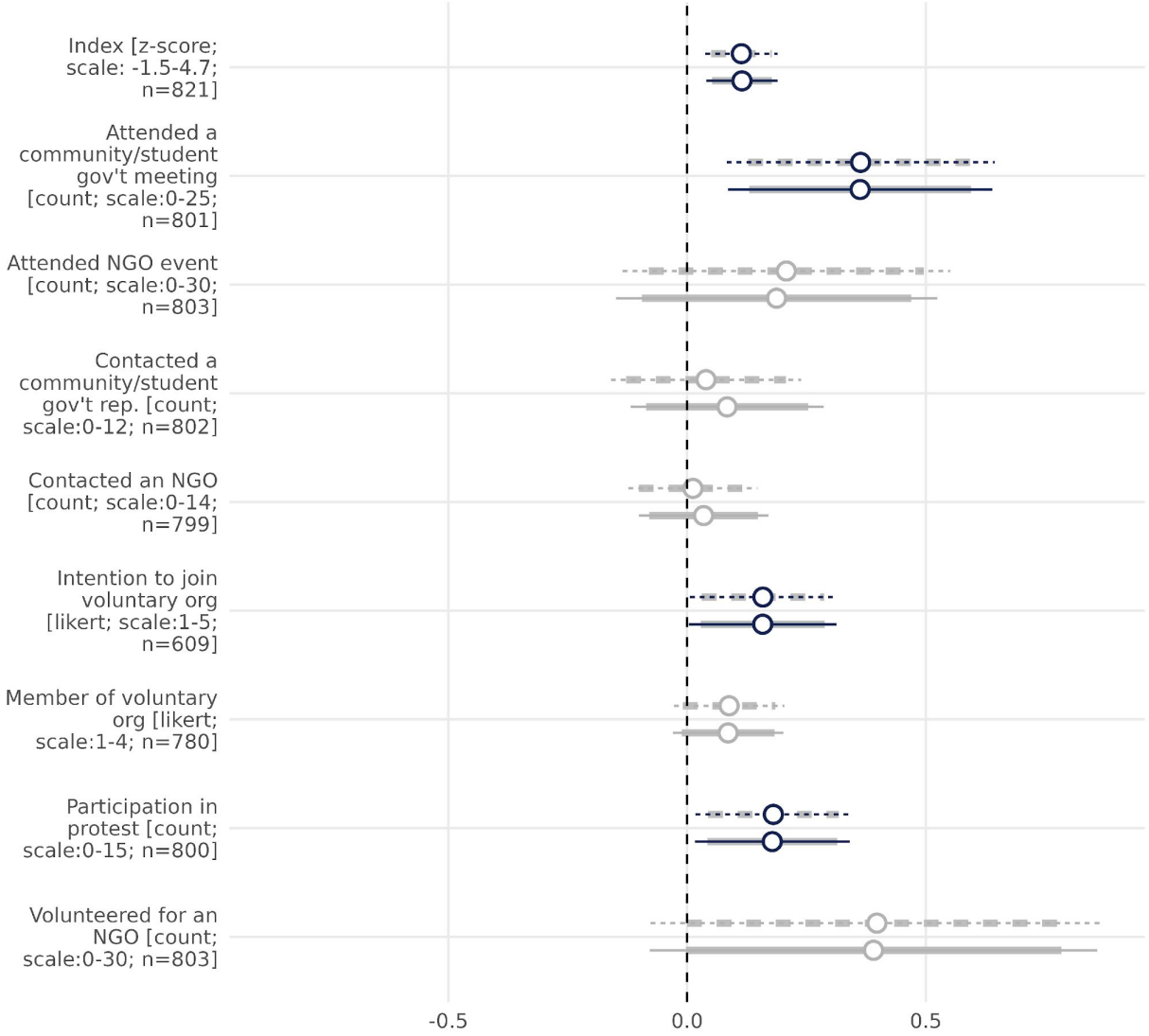
Intent-to-treat effect estimate of TEF participation.



Note: estimates are on the scale of the outcome variable, dashed lines include covariates.

Effect of TEFs on civic engagement

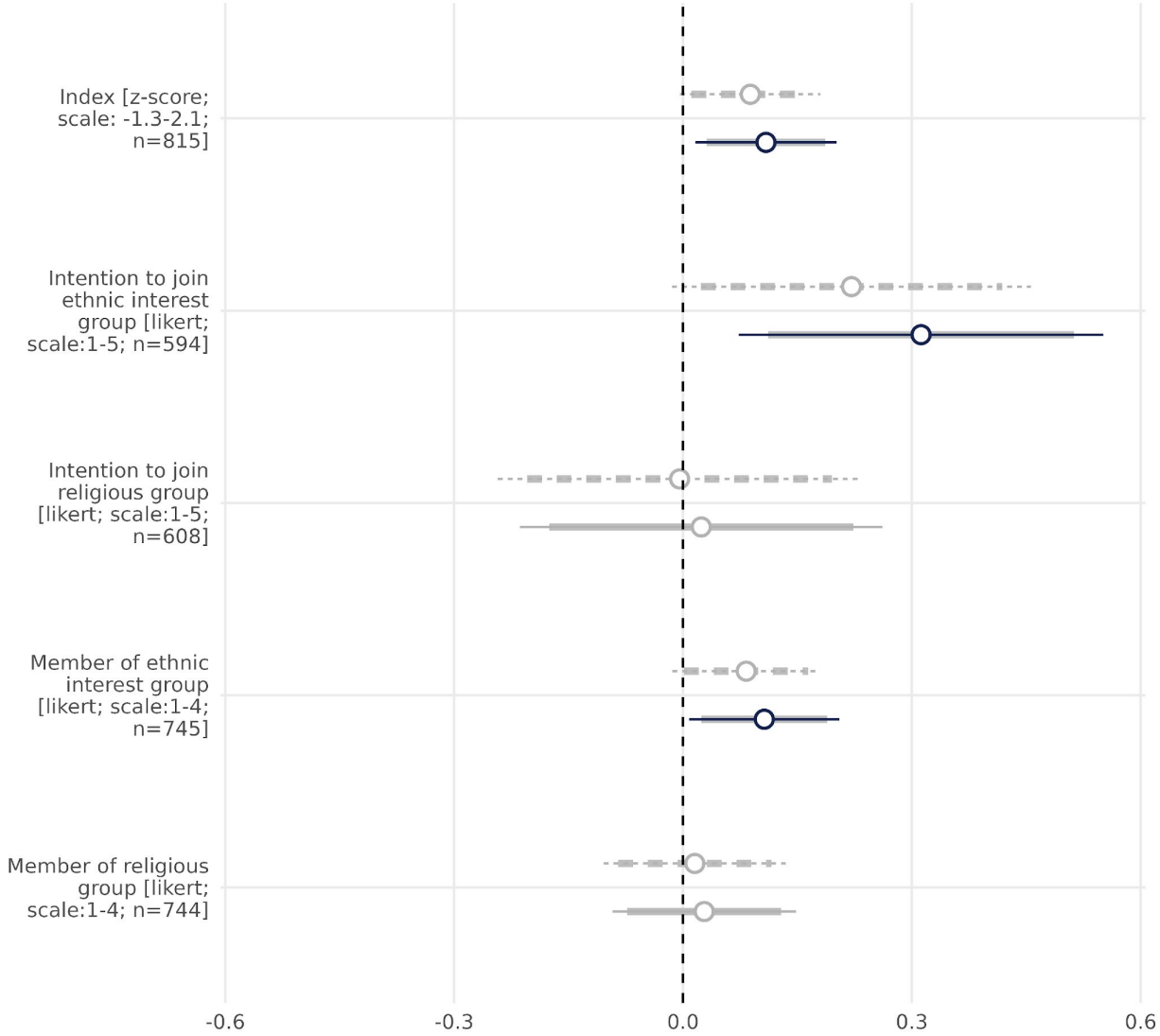
Intent-to-treat effect estimate of TEF participation.



Note: estimates are on the scale of the outcome variable, dashed lines include covariates.

Effect of TEFs on sectarian engagement

Intent-to-treat effect estimate of TEF participation.



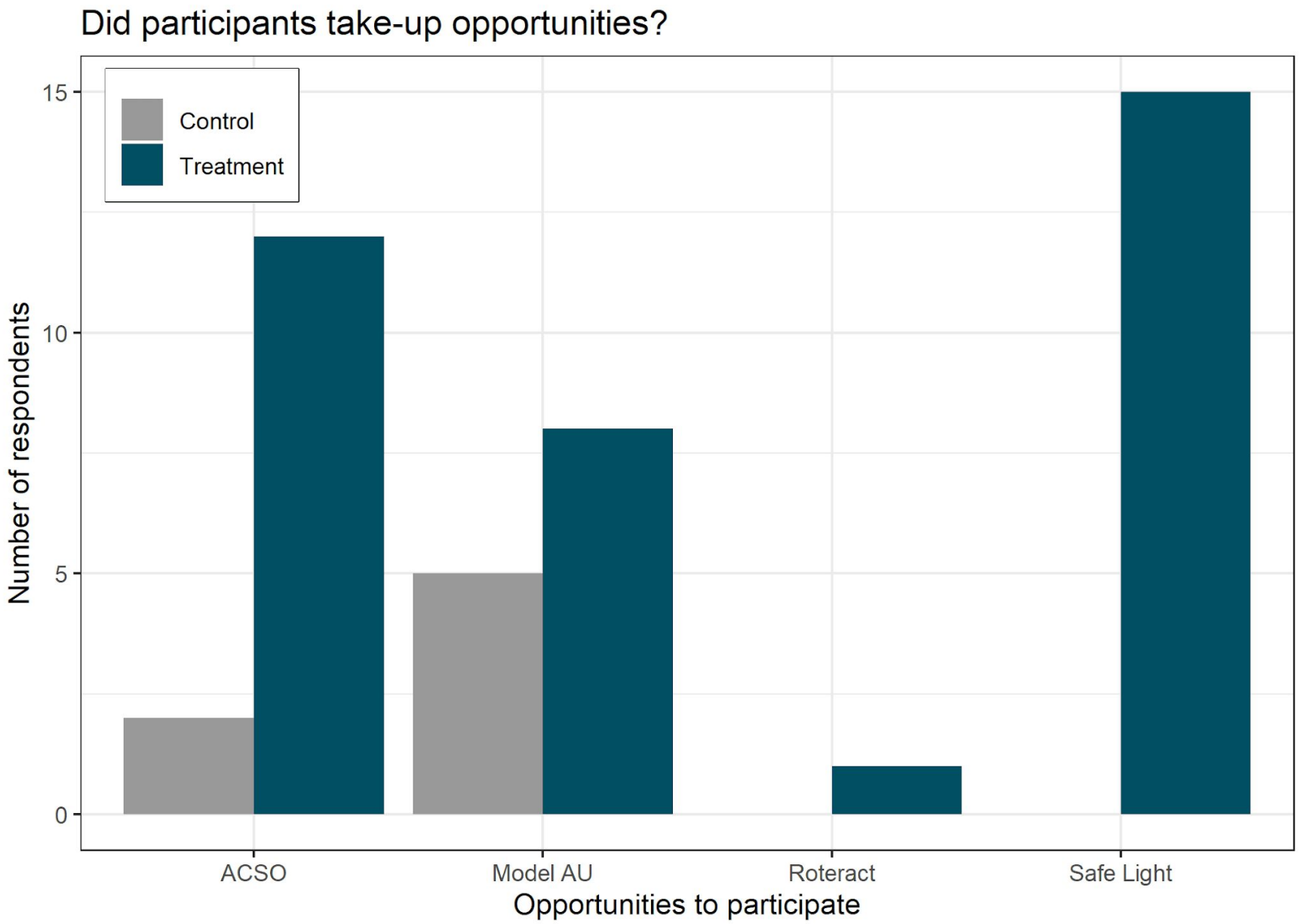
Note: estimates are on the scale of the outcome variable, dashed lines include covariates.

Measures where TEF had a significant impact:

- Community meeting attendance: 35% increase (0.36; mean=1.04)
- Intent to join voluntary org: 4% increase (0.16; mean=4.33)
- Protest attendance: 44% increase (0.18; mean=0.38)
- Plans to start an NGO: 19% increase (0.09; mean=0.47)
- Intent to join ethnicity-based group: 9% increase (0.22; mean=2.48)
- Ethnicity-based group membership: 6% increase (0.11; mean=1.87)

Impact of TEF across groups:

- Similar effects across gender, ethnicity
- Stronger effects for participants that made a new friend

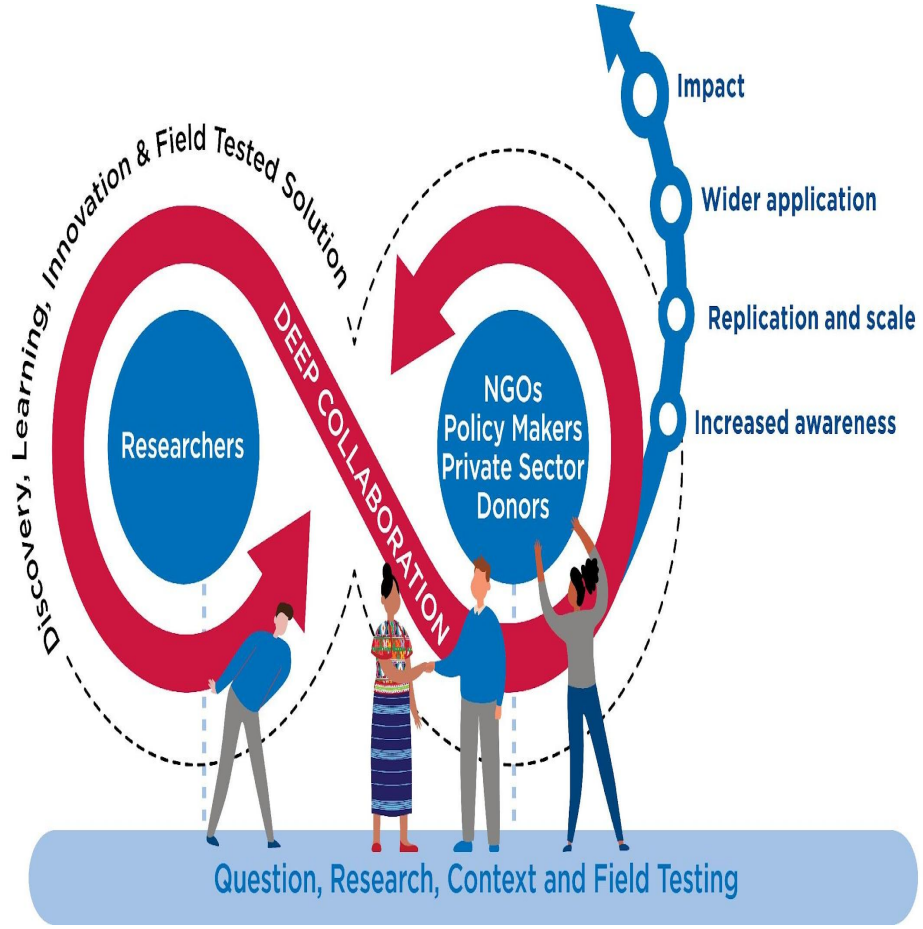

Did participants take-up opportunities?
Control
Treatment
Number of respondents
15
10
5
0
ACSO
Model AU
Roteract
Safe Light
Opportunities to participate

Takeaways:

- Low-cost intervention to increase civic engagement worked very well
- It's worth conducting more research applying this approach in new contexts and at larger scales
- We need to experiment with different approaches to tolerance and cohesion
- Increasing engagement with government and political institutions is harder than expected, and we need more research to understand why

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective



- Our Project was entirely shaped by the LASER PULSE ERT model
- The implementation of all project activities was grounded in the researcher-practitioner partnership and collaboration

What is the benefit of this kinds of partnership and collaboration?

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

- LASER PULSE perspective:

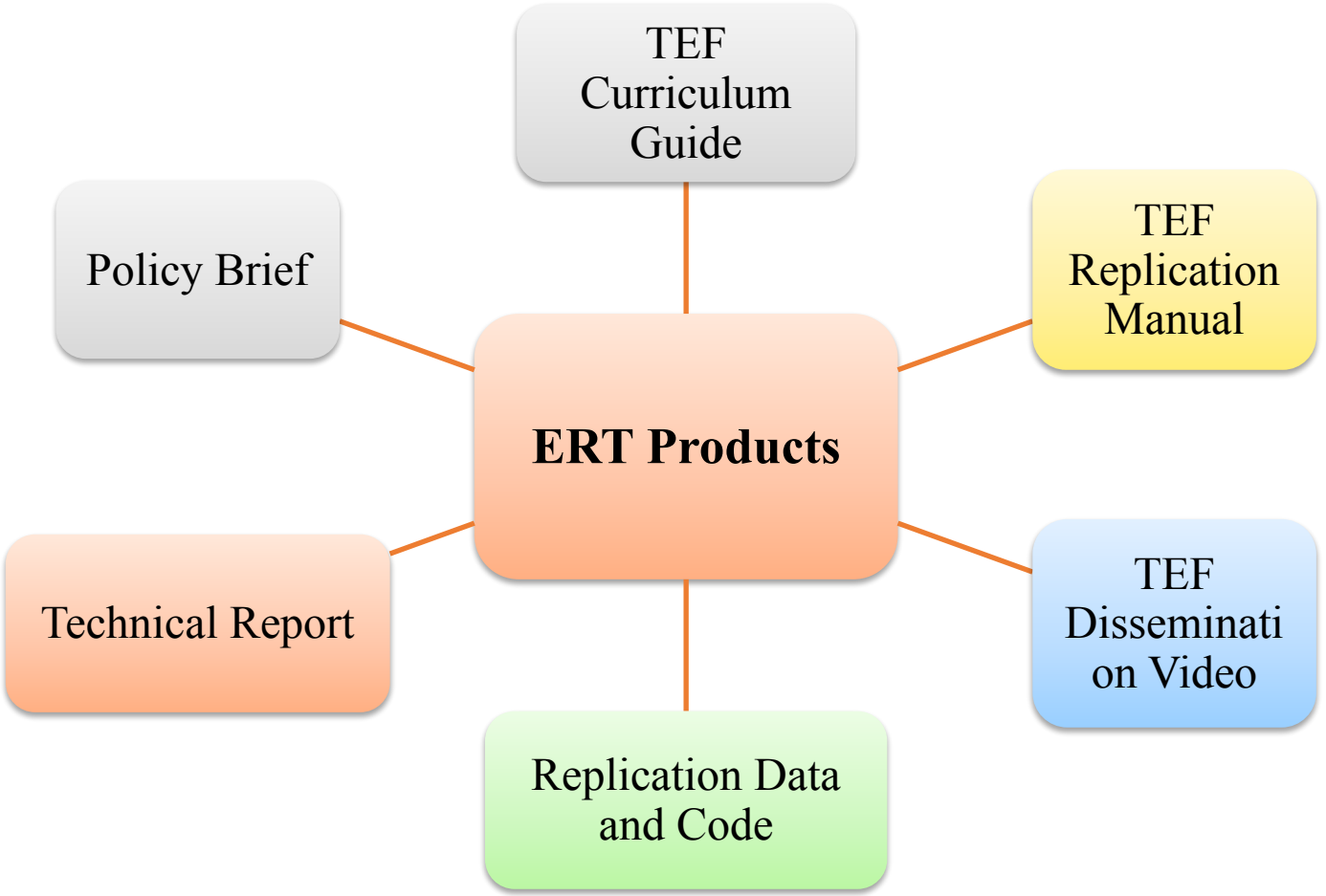
✔ ***"Researchers are increasingly tasked to demonstrate the impact of their research on practice and policy, and researchers themselves often want their research to have "real world" impact rather than residing only in academic journals and discussed amongst their peers".***

✔ However, researchers, especially in Africa, face challenges to conduct research where it can be translated into practice impacting policy.

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

- Researcher-practitioner partnership whereas creates an a platform where researches result in translation products

- In our case, co-designed translation products of our project include these indicated in the fig.



Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

- ✔ *TEF Curriculum Guide* – integrate low-cost behavioral interventions that have been shown to be highly effective at increasing civic engagement and social cohesion
- ✔ A *TEF Replication Manual* – outlining the intervention, the research findings, and a detailed guide for replicating TEF events in other contexts
- ✔ *A TEF Dissemination Video* – pitching the TEF model to government agencies and civil society organizations
- ✔ *Technical Report* – summarizing the project, describing the results, and laying out the policy implications of our research.
- ✔ *A Policy Brief* – describing our intervention, methodology, and results that provide information and recommendations for a policymaking audience
- ✔ *Replication Data and Code* – replicating our analysis for each academic article will be released at the time of publication.

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

- ***What does this partnership require?***
  - ✔ A process in which collaborative partnership between the research and translation partners is established as a foundation ultimately for ensuring working together effectively.
  - ✔ A case in point in the process of our partnership developed the following foundations:
    - Fostering and empowering partnership
      - Professional care and support – safety for the team members
      - Respect for each other's idea
      - Trust and transparency
      - Acknowledgement and appreciation
      - Ownership and authenticity

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

Dissemination

- In the eyes of LASER PULSE, dissemination aspires for ***"wider application and scale-up beyond the initial translation partnership and toward a larger uptake of relevant findings in the field or region".***
- With respect to our dissemination strategy, we have leveraged IPD's connections to civil society organizations and government agencies to share our findings with key stakeholders and encourage the use of the TEF model by government agencies and civil society organizations.

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

- These stakeholder organizations primarily include:
  - ✔ The Ethiopian Civil Society Forum,
  - ✔ The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations,
  - ✔ The Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations,
  - ✔ The Ministry of Peace,
  - ✔ The Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, and
  - ✔ The Addis Ababa City Gulele Sub City Administration
- However, we want to scale up the scope of our dissemination plan in a more broader scale aiming at:
  - ✔ Enabling policy makers to carry out TEF activities in all public universities throughout the country.
  - ✔ Doing so is a great potential in itself, as a significant number of young people are found in more than 40 public universities, and yet universities are still often the center of violence.

Part IV: Partnership and Collaboration: The LASER PULSE ERT Model in Perspective

Acknowledgement

- USAID; LASER PULSE; and Purdue University for the financial and technical support
- The AAU student clubs and those who participated in FGD sessions, TEF events, and the online surveys
- Addis Ababa University:
  - ✔ The President Office for signing the MoU
  - ✔ The Office of Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer
    - The Research Office for hosting the project
  - ✔ The AAU Finance and Budget for administering the projects' financial transaction
- Initiative for Peace and Development for implementing activities related to the ERT
- The entire research team: Juan, Fitsum, Hareg, David, and Jeremy

Future Plans

What worked:

- Creating peer-to-peer social ties
- Connecting youth with actionable information about how to participate

What didn't work:

- Emphasizing common youth identity
- Dialogue, social contact

What we'd like to do in the future:

- Expand TEF workshops to new universities, non-student youth
- Invest additional resources to increase intensity of workshops
- Experiment with new approaches to social cohesion and tolerance
- Conduct additional impact evaluations to understand when and why these interventions work
- Increase partnership with more concerned practitioners
- Involve policymakers in the process of project co-designing and implementation
- Share our experiences in this project with multiple stakeholders working on and with youth