

Background

It is thought that democratic societies — in which individuals trust and engage with each other, and their government, human rights, and the rule of law are respected — can contribute to peace and economic growth (InterAction 2022; United Nations n.d.). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Center serves to integrate DRG efforts within the agency's overall development portfolio. The centre focuses on applying policy, best practice, and research to strengthen foreign assistance programs across more than 90 field missions (USAID 2022).

As part of its efforts to disseminate information and generate new evidence (USAID 2021), the DRG Center commissioned the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and NORC at the University of Chicago to produce a series of six evidence gap maps (EGMs), one per programmatic area, to identify the state of the evidence on past or current efforts and their effects.

Key findings

- The DRG evidence base has grown substantially over the past 20 years. The majority of EGM evidence in low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs) comes from interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa (31%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (24%).
- Across the EGMs, the most-evaluated interventions include quotas for elected positions, public education, interventions to reduce violence or crime, and citizen engagement. The outcomes most studied include: beliefs, attitudes, and norms; civic participation and engagement; violence and crime; and access to and quality of public services.
- Of the six EGMs, five have evidence gaps for interventions related to regulatory and institutional processes, or their associated outcomes, such as transparency.
- We identified clusters of studies about legal reform interventions, behavior change communication, and tax policy and administrative reforms, among other topics – for which few or no SRs were included. Opportunities exist to synthesize evidence on these topics.
- Based on available information from high-confidence SRs, some of the factors that can affect implementation of citizen monitoring include buy-in from public service providers and the use of performance benchmarks and monitoring tools.

Other information from high-confidence SRs suggests that police commitment or discrimination against women (among other factors) can affect implementation of policing. Incorporation of peace education, or the extent of conflict, can also affect media-for-peace interventions in fragile situations.

What is an EGM?

3ie EGMs are collections of evidence that include impact evaluations (IEs) and systematic reviews (SRs) for a given sector or policy issue, organized according to the types of programs evaluated and the outcomes measured. DRG EGMs also include evaluations with qualitative designs that aim to establish causal attribution. * Each EGM serves as an interactive online visualization of the evidence base, displayed in a framework of relevant interventions and outcomes. They highlight clusters or gaps regarding primary studies and synthesis efforts and provide insight on the types of research questions asked and methods used. These maps help decision-makers to target their resources by taking stock of available evidence and inform follow-on research. They also facilitate evidence-informed decision-making by making existing research more accessible.

*Referred to in this brief as “qualitative studies.”

The EGMs are intended to support USAID in developing an evidence-informed understanding of approaches and identifying knowledge gaps where further research is needed. The six EGMs follow the foreign assistance framework, which contains six program areas: rule of law, human rights, civil society, independent media, political competition, and governance effectiveness. This brief summarizes the main points learned about the evidence base for the DRG sector.¹ The next section presents the primary findings in terms of evidence clusters and gaps identified across the six EGMs, followed by policy and program findings. The brief concludes with research methodology considerations and potential priorities.

State of the evidence base in the DRG sector

The six EGMs identified 1,868 unique studies (1,623 IEs, 63 qualitative studies aiming to establish causal attribution, and 182 SRs) which form the evidence base of the DRG sector and will be described in the following sections. Readers can refer to the EGM reports for more detail about specific types of designs and methods included.

Table 1. Programmatic focus of six DRG EGMs

EGM	Programmatic focus
Rule of law	Strengthen justice institutions and frameworks of laws, justice and legal services, and civil society capacity to uphold justice and the rule of law
Human rights	Ensure uniform access to basic needs by preventing discrimination, violence, and other violations of human rights, and improve relationships among individuals, governments, and non-state actors
Civil society	Empower civil society groups and citizens to advance participation in civil society and uphold inclusion, democratic values, and government accountability
Independent media	Support the development of independent media and the use of media for development of democratization and peacebuilding
Political competition	Promote peaceful political competition throughout the electoral cycle, including through law and administration, political parties, and voter participation
Governance effectiveness	Strengthen the ability of governments to remain accountable, administer programs and undertake reforms, and promote public participation

Note: Please refer to Table 7 to access the full reports and summaries for each EGM.

DRG evidence base continues to substantially grow

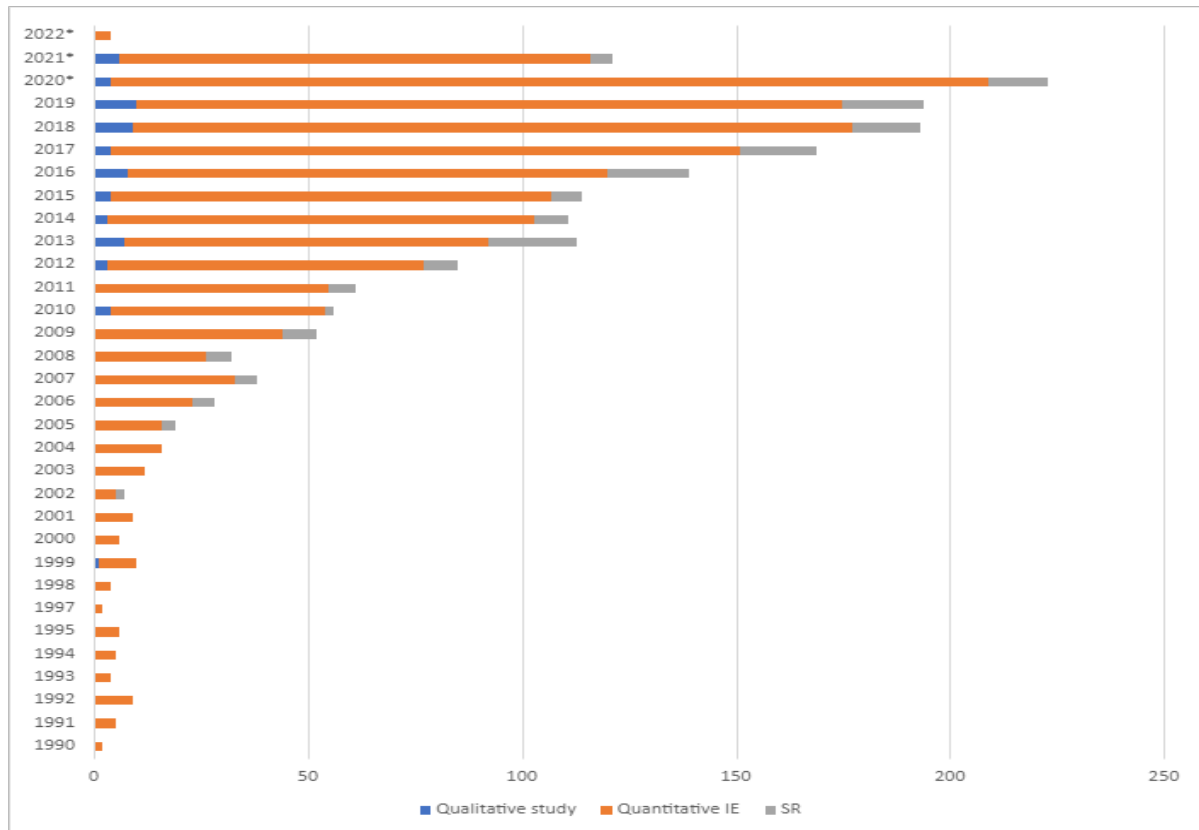
Across the six DRG EGMs, the quantity of IEs and SRs published each year has increased substantially over the last 20 years, particularly since 2009–2010 (Figure 1). For example, there were over eight times more studies published in the 12 years leading up to 2020 (1,510 studies from 2009–2020) as there were from the preceding 12-year period (183 studies from 1997–2008). Quantitative IEs using experimental and quasi-experimental designs to attribute changes in outcomes to a specific intervention represent the majority of included studies (87%; 1,623 out of 1,868 studies).

There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of SRs published on the effects of interventions in the DRG sector. Of 182 SRs identified, 10 were ongoing as of the EGM search period, and 143 have been published since 2010. The latter include, among others, SRs by Bourey

¹ For more information about conceptual similarities and differences across the EGMs, total study counts across overarching topic areas, or comparisons of IE designs across the EGMs, see also the comparative analysis brief.

and colleagues (2015) on interventions to prevent intimate partner violence, Lawry and colleagues (2016) on land rights interventions, Qin and colleagues (2019) on user charges in health systems, and Waddington and colleagues (2019) on citizen engagement in public services. Across the EGMs, we appraised 31 SRs as medium confidence and 43 SRs as high confidence.² Of the high-confidence SRs, 27 were published from 2010 onwards, nine of which reported including studies from L&MICs.

Figure 1. Number of included studies in USAID DRG EGMs, by year (1990–2022)



Note: Studies included in more than one EGM have been counted only once. Studies that were ongoing as of the EGM search period are not included here.

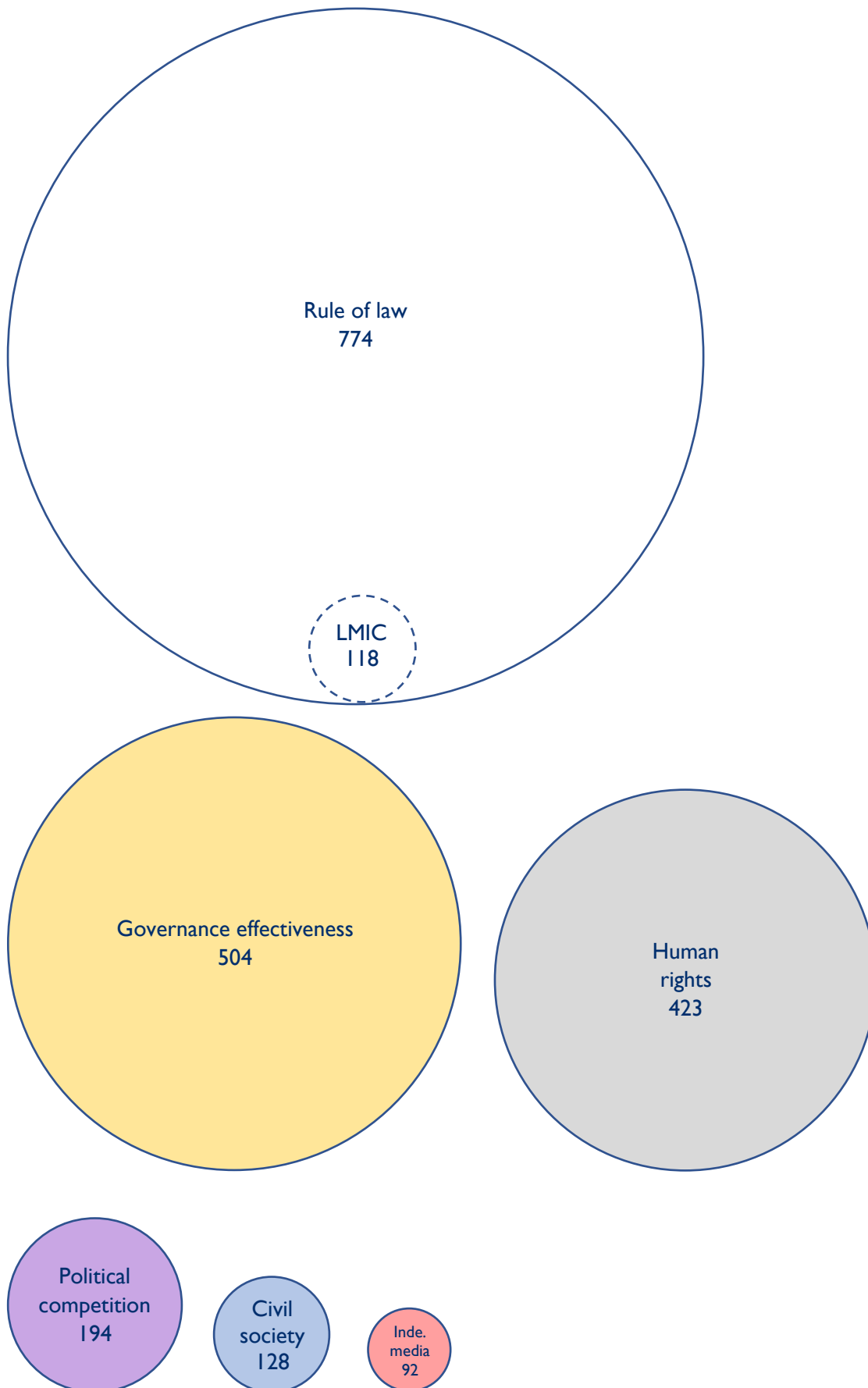
*The inclusion criteria for the EGMs considered studies published in 1990 or later (until a date between 2021 and 2022, when the search was conducted, depending on the EGM). There is a noticeable decrease in the number of studies published in 2021 and 2022. However, results in 2020 and beyond are likely undercounted, given that EGM implementation was staggered, and the first search period concluded in July 2020. In addition, there is generally a time lag between an evaluation being published and indexed by searchable repositories.

For studies in L&MICs, the evidence base is largest for governance effectiveness and human rights EGMs

Across the EGMs, the governance effectiveness and human rights EGMs have the largest evidence base for studies in L&MICs (Figure 2). The size of the evidence base for the rule of law EGM differs depending on whether studies in high-income countries (HICs) are considered. With the exception of the rule of law EGM, all targeted populations in L&MICs.

² Included SRs were critically appraised to assess our confidence in the findings of the review based on the authors' methods. The appraisal included criteria relating to the search, screening, data extraction, and synthesis, and covered common areas prone to biases. Each SR was rated as high-, medium-, or low-confidence. For more information on the appraisal tool used, see the EGM technical reports.

Figure 2. Number of included studies by DRG EGM



Evaluations using qualitative designs that aim to establish causal attribution are less common

Evaluations using qualitative designs that aim to establish causal attribution are less common and, with the exception of one known and included study, all have been conducted since 2010.³ Overall, 63 studies (or 3% of all unique studies) included in the six EGMs use qualitative methods, with most identified by the human rights EGM (Table 2). Within the human rights EGM, qualitative studies cover topics that include, among others, supporting those who work to promote or protect human rights, and mainstreaming of rights into development, such as a process tracing study by Bamanyaki and Holvoet (2016) on gender-responsive budgeting.

Table 2. Included studies by programmatic area

EGM	Quantitative IEs and qualitative studies ^a			Systematic reviews	
	Number of included IEs and qualitative studies	Quantitative IEs (%)	Qualitative studies (%)	Number of included SRs	High- and medium-confidence SRs
Rule of law ^b	656	650 (99%)	6 (1%)	118	51
Human rights	377	347 (92%)	30 (8%)	46	13
Civil society	126	116 (92%)	10 (8%)	2	1
Independent media	90	87 (98%)	2 (2%)	2	2
Political competition	192	188 (98%)	4 (2%)	2	-
Governance effectiveness	485	466 ^c (96%)	20 ^c (4%)	19	9

^a Only studies that used identified qualitative designs to identify causal links were included.

^b Studies in the rule of law EGM conducted in HICs are included here. With the exception of the rule of law EGM, all other EGMs targeted populations in L&MICs.

^c One included IE in the governance effectiveness EGM uses both a quantitative study design and a qualitative study design that aimed to identify causal links and is counted under both columns.

The majority of IEs and qualitative studies from L&MICs are based in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean

Of the included IEs and qualitative studies in L&MICs, almost one third (31%) came from Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by almost one quarter (24%) from Latin America and the Caribbean (Table 3).

Table 3. Geographic distribution of included IEs and qualitative studies in L&MICs across DRG EGMs

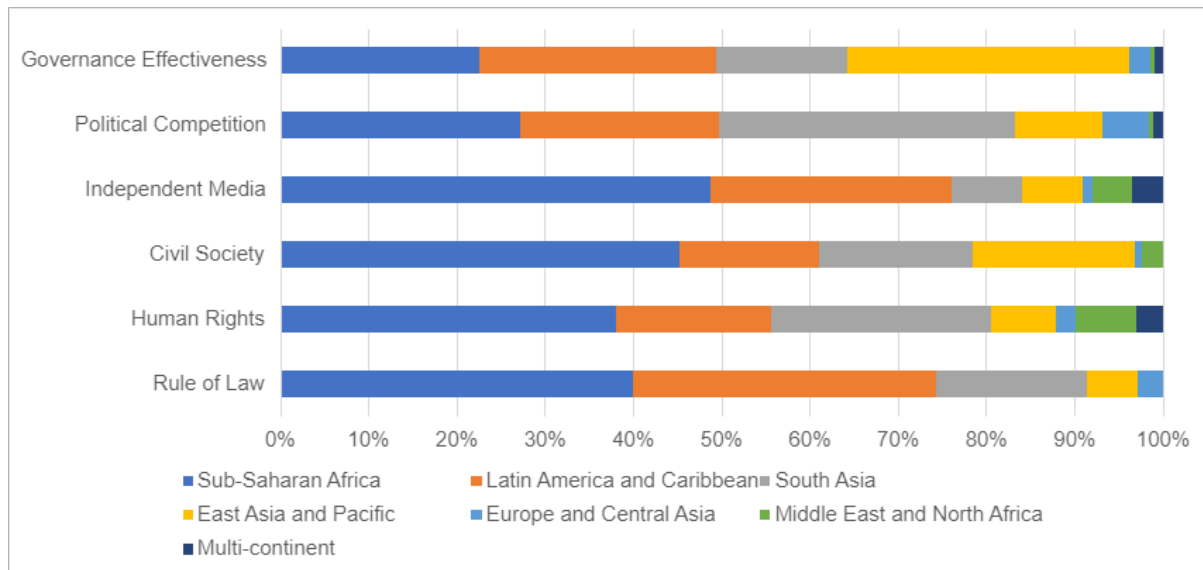
Continent	Number of IEs & qualitative studies	%
East Asia and Pacific	212	19%
Europe and Central Asia	31	3%
Latin America and Caribbean	268	24%
Middle East and North Africa	35	3%
Multi-continent	19	2%
South Asia	212	19%
Sub-Saharan Africa	353	31%
Total	1,130	

Note: Studies included in more than one EGM have been counted only once. Studies in HICs from the rule of law EGM are not included here. With the exception of the rule of law EGM, all other EGMs targeted populations in L&MICs.

³ We only included studies that clearly stated which qualitative evaluation study design was used, and were trying to assess the impact of interventions on targeted outcomes, relative to what would have happened without them. As such, and to ensure consistency and reduce bias, studies were not included if they mentioned commonly accepted qualitative methods such as case studies, focus group discussions, or interviews, but did not describe steps taken to assess impact.

However, the geographic distribution and concentration of included IEs and qualitative studies varies by DRG program area (Figure 3). For the majority of EGMs, the largest concentration of studies based in L&MICs concern interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, including those in the independent media (49%), civil society (45%), rule of law (40%), and human rights EGMs (38%). However, the political competition and governance effectiveness EGMs are exceptions; studies from Sub-Saharan Africa represent a smaller proportion of the overall sample of evaluations identified (27% and 23%, respectively). In the political competition EGM, South Asia has the largest cluster of studies (34%) and, in the governance EGM, the largest cluster of studies are in East Asia and the Pacific (32%).

Figure 3. Geographic distribution of included IEs and qualitative studies, by EGM



Note: Studies in HICs included in the rule of law EGM are not included here. With the exception of the rule of law EGM, all other EGMs targeted populations in L&MICs.

Of IEs and qualitative studies based in L&MICs across the EGMs, over one third (37%; 413 out of 1,130) were conducted in four countries: India, China, Brazil, and Uganda (Figure 4). The concentration of studies among a minority of countries also differs across program areas. For example, about one quarter of IEs and qualitative studies included in the political competition and governance effectiveness EGMs are concentrated in India (26%; 50 out of 192) and China (23%; 110 out of 485), respectively. Figure 2 shows studies in L&MICs only. The majority of included IEs and qualitative studies in the rule of law EGM, the only EGM to include studies in HICs, were those in the United States (71%; 464 out of 656).

Evidence clusters

We summarize evidence clusters as identified for each EGM individually, which show the most common interventions and outcomes from included studies (Tables 4 and 5). For each EGM, evidence clusters were identified based on the distribution of evidence, such as where there were many studies relative to the average in that map. Their practical significance was informed through consultation with an advisory group of researchers and practitioners for the relevant program area, a subject matter expert, USAID staff, and theoretical considerations.

Although the independent media EGM shows the smallest evidence base overall, it has the greatest clustering of evidence for an intervention across the EGMs, with 66% of studies (61 out of 92) evaluating the dissemination of media content on accountability and democracy promotion. The political competition EGM's largest intervention cluster encompasses voter information, education and get-out-the-vote campaigns (37%, 71 out of 194 studies).

This is followed by the human rights EGM, whose largest evidence cluster comprises behavior change communication (23%; 97 out of 423 studies); the rule of law EGM's capacity building and system reform of police (21%; 163 out of 774 studies), and the governance EGM's tax policy and administrative reforms, and management of non-tax revenues (21%; 108 out of 504 studies). Finally, the civil society EGM's largest intervention category covers convening/public events focusing on education on civic values and political processes (17%; 22 out of 128 studies).

Interventions most evaluated by program area: public education campaigns are the most common intervention

We identified where clusters of evidence existed for similar types of interventions across more than one EGM (Table 4). Public education campaigns are the most common intervention, with clusters across four EGMs. They include voter education, education on civic values or political processes, and information dissemination. With regard to the governance EGM, we also found evidence clusters for tax policy and administrative reforms and decentralization. These interventions are not directly captured in the other EGMs.

Table 4. Interventions most evaluated across EGMs

Interventions	EGM					
	Rule of law	Human rights	Civil society	Independent media	Political competition	Governance
Public education campaigns <i>Examples: Voter education including voter information, education, and get-out-the-vote activities; convening/public events providing education on civic values and political processes; general education of civil society; information dissemination</i>		•	•	•	•	
Quotas or other interventions to prevent discrimination or promote inclusion <i>Examples: Means to remedy against systematic discrimination; measures to eliminate discriminatory barriers to service access for at-risk groups; efforts to make the political competition process more inclusive; measures to promote inclusion within the government</i>		•			•	•
Interventions to reduce or prevent violence or crime <i>Examples: Approaches to reducing or preventing violence outside of the criminal justice system; support services for at-risk individuals or groups; strengthening the capacity of the police; providing services to offender populations or those at risk of committing crimes; mechanisms to deter crime</i>	•	•				
Interventions that encourage citizen participation <i>Examples: Interventions in which citizens are involved in policy-making decisions, such as participatory budgeting; citizen observers, monitoring of front-line service providers and reporting mechanisms</i>			•			•

Outcomes most evaluated by program area

Similarly, several outcomes show clusters of evidence across multiple EGMs, including beliefs, attitudes, and norms, and civic participation and engagement. The governance EGM also has a cluster for human and social development outcomes, including measures of health, education, justice or food security, or individual or household wealth.

Table 5. Outcomes most evaluated across EGMs

Outcomes	EGM					
	Rule of law	Human rights	Civil society	Independent media	Political competition	Governance
Beliefs, attitudes, and norms; awareness <i>Examples: Public, state, or service-provider beliefs, attitudes, and norms about human rights; measures of citizen support for or perceptions of the value of democracy; awareness of rights, responsibilities, and laws</i>		•	•	•		
Civic participation and engagement <i>Examples: voter turnout and voting behavior; citizens' participation in democratic processes</i>			•	•	•	
Violence and crime <i>Examples: Violence or other forms of harm by the public or other non-state actors; crime and prison population numbers</i>	•	•				
Access to and quality of public services <i>Examples: Government transparency, accountability, or performance; access to services, rights, and justice; effectiveness of public services; economic growth and business performance</i>				•		•

Key gaps

In this section we present a summary of findings on primary evidence gaps. Primary evidence gaps are areas in which little or no IE evidence exists for particular interventions, outcomes, and populations.

Primary evidence gaps

Strengthening collaboration, peaceful transition, and transparency are key components of DRG programs that represent important opportunities for future research. The human rights, independent media, political competition, governance, and rule of law EGMs identified evidence gaps for interventions and/or outcomes related to **regulatory and institutional processes**. Examples of specific gaps are presented in Table 6, below.

Table 6. Examples of areas with primary evidence gaps related to regulatory and institutional processes

EGM	Examples of areas with primary evidence gaps
Rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Interventions</u>: Community monitoring of justice institutions; legal empowerment; and support to civil society and the media • <u>Outcomes</u>: Transparency; integration; and diversity and representation of minority groups
Human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Interventions</u>: Remediating violations, such as holding perpetrators to account; supporting rights defenders; and monitoring human rights compliance • <u>Outcomes</u>: Extent of investigations and prosecutions for human rights violations; restrictions on citizens' rights; and redress for victims of human rights violations
Independent media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Interventions</u>: Interventions that had “absolute” evidence gaps with no IEs available included efforts related to media protection services or relationships and coalition building, and financial assistance, institutional capacity building and other support for media actors, among others • <u>Outcomes</u>: Newsroom professionalization, or outcomes related to the enabling environment for independent media
Political competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Interventions</u>: Electoral justice interventions, such as capacity building for dispute resolution • <u>Outcomes</u>: Among other outcomes, transparent competition such as political party transparency, and accountable competition such as legal framework compliance
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Interventions</u>: Quotas for appointed positions; internal government management such as budget transparency or procurement processes • <u>Outcomes</u>: Changes in behavior within government, government processes, and accountability and quality of policymaking

In addition, the civil society EGM had an absolute evidence gap for interventions that focused on assessment and research, including analytic efforts to understand the environment and inform next steps. Methodological constraints may explain this gap to some extent. For example, interventions that support assessment and research to allow civil society to improve their activities can have long theories of change that can be difficult to measure, which might be one reason why there are no IEs under this category. Evidence gaps for outcomes included civil society oversight of private institutions, civil society resilience and sustainability, and resilience to closing space.

With regard to the analysis of populations, studies were generally less available for countries with **relatively closed** civil society or media spaces, in closed autocracies, or with more fragility or conflict, which is not surprising given the practical and ethical challenges of completing research in these contexts.

For example, of the included IEs and qualitative studies, none were located in Syria, and few were located in Somalia (n = 5). Both countries are categorized as closed autocracies and continue to experience conflict (Boese et al. 2022; World Bank 2022a). They also receive significant development funding. Based on 2020 data (the most recent available), Syria received more official development assistance than any other country (over \$10 billion in current US\$) and Somalia received the tenth-largest amount of official development assistance (over \$3 billion in current US\$) (World Bank 2022b).

Synthesis efforts and opportunities

Evidence clusters are usually observed together with synthesis efforts. Topics with evidence synthesis that we rated as high- or medium-confidence include **community engagement efforts, capacity building for government staff and police, and violence and crime prevention.**

Specific interventions include the following:

- Citizen monitoring and engagement.
- Community mobilization.
- Participatory decision-making.
- Psychosocial support.
- Capacity building for government staff, and capacity building and system reform of police.
- Procurement.
- Mechanisms to deter crime or violence, diversion of offenders out of the criminal justice system, and crime prevention.
- Rehabilitation and reintegration for ex-offenders.
- Media for peace.

Where there are evidence clusters with no synthesis, or in cases where a synthesis product is outdated or we have assessed it as low-confidence, there is an opportunity for synthesis.

Opportunities for future evidence synthesis include a variety of topics across the EGMs, such as **support services, legal or administrative reforms, and media dissemination.**

Specific intervention areas with existing opportunities include:

- Behavior change communication;
- Support services for survivors of violence and other historically at-risk groups.
- Legal reforms such as implementation of ratified human rights treaties or remedies against discrimination and violence.
- Tax policy and administrative reforms.
- Dissemination of media content related to social norms for peacebuilding;
- Civic education events; and
- Any intervention group from the political competition EGM.

Factors affecting implementation identified in high-confidence SRs

In this section, we summarize factors that could affect implementation of DRG interventions, such as those that could facilitate implementation or create barriers. These factors are based on considerations highlighted in six high-confidence SRs that included studies in L&MICs and were published in or after 2010 (Braga et al. 2019; Higginson et al. 2015; Koper and Mayo-Wilson 2012; Molina et al. 2017; Sonnenfeld et al. 2021; Waddington et al. 2019). Waddington and colleagues' (2019) review was included across the civil society, independent media, and governance effectiveness EGMs.

We present these factors with the caveat that they should be treated as considerations rather than conclusive, since, in most cases, they are found in a small number of studies. Furthermore, this is not an exhaustive list of potential ways in which to implement interventions across a range of sectors, and there may be other policies or programs that are not yet covered by the evidence base.

Citizen engagement in public service delivery

Two high-confidence SRs reported effects and implementation considerations for citizen monitoring initiatives. Waddington and colleagues (2019) reported that direct engagement between service users and providers can improve some intermediate or final service delivery outcomes. While they found an increase in physical access to services and service quality, they found no changes in the reduction of absenteeism, leakages from embezzlement, or cost of services. They also stated that this is not enough to guarantee impact, particularly in a situation of supply chain bottlenecks.

Molina and colleagues (2017) found comparable results. They reported a positive effect of community monitoring interventions on the occurrence and perceptions of corruption. However, they noted that the ability to generalize their findings was limited because included studies were primarily located in Africa and Asia, and only a few measured similar corruption indicators.

Possible barriers to implementing **citizen monitoring** approaches include citizens not being motivated or choosing not to participate, despite receiving support for the process (Molina et al. 2017). However, these approaches may be more effectively implemented by using steps such as the following:

1. Citizens are in direct contact with front-line service providers or politicians (Waddington et al. 2019; Molina et al. 2017).
2. Both providers and citizens are involved in the monitoring process and the creation of common knowledge about it (Waddington et al. 2019).
3. The monitoring process uses performance benchmarks (Waddington et al. 2019).
4. Citizens have accessible information or tools to engage in monitoring (Molina et al. 2017).
5. The intervention includes activities with local community organizations to strengthen community members' voices (Waddington et al. 2019).

In addition, Waddington and colleagues (2019) looked at programs to support direct consultation between citizens and public service providers and found mixed results on immediate outcomes. These interventions included providing **information about public servants' performance** to the public, **informing citizens about their rights**, and **citizen participation in public decision-making**. They found that citizen engagement interventions were effective in improving participation in service delivery governance, meeting attendance, and knowledge about intervention processes, but not in terms of provider responsiveness, politician performance, or staff motivation (Waddington et al. 2019).

Citizen engagement initiatives appear to be more effective when conditions such as the following are met (Waddington et al. 2019):

1. Citizens are able to access the public service through front-line service providers.
2. Actors whose performance is analyzed and shared are willing to support and facilitate the intervention, and steps are taken to ensure buy-in from front-line service providers.
3. Common knowledge is generated among citizens and providers on monitoring processes and people's rights.
4. An appropriate level of social sanction risk is established for service providers.
5. Steps are taken to strengthen citizens' participation, such as building capacity for collective action (e.g., encouraging citizens to form coalitions) and addressing local barriers to enable vulnerable groups to participate.

Policing

Multiple SRs identified factors that influence policing interventions, including police commitment, discrimination against women, intensification of police activities, and capacity (Braga et al. 2019; Higginson et al. 2015; Koper and Mayo-Wilson 2012).

Braga and colleagues (2019) studied the effects of **policing small geographic areas or crime “hot-spots”** (p. 1), and included studies primarily in HICs, with several in Argentina, Colombia, and India. They found positive effects of hot-spot policing on crime reduction. They also found that studies measuring crime in areas surrounding hot spots associated hot-spot policing with a diffusion of positive effects beyond hot spots. Regarding implementation (see below), they highlighted that other criminal justice interventions generally experience similar challenges, and mitigation steps such as training or accountability checks during implementation have been used.

Higginson and colleagues (2015) reported effects and factors that can influence **policing approaches to reduce interpersonal violent crime in L&MICs** or acts of violence between individuals or small groups. They found that the effects of community-oriented policing programs varied widely across locations, and there was insufficient evidence as to whether they reduce violent crime. They were also unable to conclusively state the effects of police bans and crackdowns due to the small number of included studies about diverse policing strategies. Because of a small evidence base that consisted of studies primarily assessed as medium- or low-quality, they noted that the ability to generalize findings to other contexts was limited.

Koper and Mayo-Wilson (2012) reviewed **police approaches to reduce illegal gun possession**. They included studies primarily from HICs, with several from Colombia. They found that patrols directed at illegal gun-carrying appear to prevent gun crime. However, they cautioned that their findings were less conclusive due to a small evidence base, a variety of study designs and analytical methods, and variation in the quality of information on the amount of time spent or other features of implementation, among other issues.

Examples of factors that may affect the implementation of policing approaches include the following:

Police commitment, collaboration, and corruption

Low commitment among police leadership, or resistance from police officers to cooperate with changes to approach, can challenge implementation (Braga et al., 2019; Higginson et al., 2015). Changes in leadership or low continuity of staff can also disrupt implementation (Braga et al. 2019; Higginson et al. 2015). Other challenges include insufficient collaboration or sharing of intelligence among police units, or low support from related justice agencies (Braga et al. 2019).

In addition, Higginson and colleagues (2015) noted that police corruption following the intervention can threaten long-term relationships with the community. Engaging with relevant stakeholders, in addition to clear communication about policing goals and tasks, can increase the chances of successful implementation.

Bias or discrimination against women

Police bias against female victims of violence, or discrimination against female police officers, can impede implementation of police initiatives. Higginson and colleagues (2015) reported that female victims have experienced secondary victimization by police or other forms of male bias. They found that “efforts to improve female access to the criminal justice system for women are destined to fall short if police officers – the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system – fail to appropriately

respond to female victims of violence” (p. 65). To strengthen the role of women in delivering police programs and access to the justice system, the authors explain that programs must also work to address discrimination against female police officers. Discrimination can include possible isolation and marginalization of female officers in their roles, or their low involvement in the program.

Intensifying police activities or visibility

Policing interventions of studies reviewed by Braga and colleagues (2019), Higginson and colleagues (2015), and Koper and Mayo-Wilson (2012) generally included increased police presence and activity. Koper and Mayo-Wilson suggested that crackdowns on carrying guns could potentially be more effective when efforts were intensive in time spent or arrests and seizures made, and when they targeted “high-risk places, times, and people” (p. 32). They also noted that increased visibility of police and penalties could also support efforts to deter crime.

However, implementation fidelity issues have included police stations not increasing patrols or police presence as agreed upon, few interactions with offenders, or difficulties for police officers to remain within hot-spot boundaries during designated time periods (Braga et al. 2019).

In addition, police initiatives such as community-oriented policing have experienced improved implementation when participants could access social services programs, especially in areas of high poverty (Higginson et al. 2015). Conversely, few improvements being made to municipal services in crime hot spots can be a barrier to implementation (Braga et al. 2019).

Capacity and resources

Higginson and colleagues (2015) also cited adequate resources and funding, and training and education as key factors that influence implementation of police efforts to reduce violence. Examples of barriers include the inability of police staffing and resources to meet the demand of increased police assignments, or technological failures such as poor-quality security camera footage or challenges with GPS technology (Braga et al. 2019).

Media for peace

Sonnenfeld and colleagues (2021) reported on multiple types of interventions, including **media for peace interventions**, that aim to strengthen social cohesion for populations living in fragile contexts. Media for peace interventions included a messaging campaign advocating tolerance and peace, and radio dramas that embedded messages about empathy and tolerance into stories. The authors found a positive effect of such interventions on trust, no effect on acceptance of diversity, and mixed and inconclusive effects on sense of belonging, willingness to participate in civil society, or willingness to help others. They cautioned that generalizability was limited by issues such as fragmentation in how studies defined outcomes, a small number of included studies, or their assessment that studies had a high risk of bias or some concerns about risk of bias.

Regarding implementation factors, they suggested that media for peace interventions that incorporated a peace education element, that were implemented in situations where conflict was not ongoing, and that used tailored content could potentially be associated with more positive effects. They speculated that incorporating peace education could have helped community members to see similarities or respect differences between groups, which could potentially increase trust.

Radio dramas implemented in situations where conflict was not active were found to have better overall effects compared to a study of a radio drama in a context of active conflict. Program participants for the study in the active conflict situation also perceived the characters’ experiences

to be less realistic compared to their own context. The possibility that other primary challenges to social cohesion in the active conflict situation were not adequately considered for the intervention could also have been associated with the study's finding of generally no effect, or negative effect, on social cohesion.

Methodological considerations for future research

Gaps in the evidence base may exist due to practical, ethical, or methodological constraints in some instances. Some outcomes of interest can be particularly challenging to measure in a precise and meaningful way. For instance, few to no studies measured integration between formal and informal justice institutions, political party transparency, the legality, equity, or sustainability of policy choices, or the extent to which decisions are ethical and inclusive. Better measures for these types of outcomes would help to identify links between an intervention and changes to political, civil society, or government processes, and to understand the mechanisms under which they are successful or unsuccessful.

Steps such as further development of DRG measures, staggered implementation of DRG interventions, and rigorous qualitative designs may help to expand or improve the DRG evidence base. For DRG measures such as those above, there is room for more methodological development, particularly in terms of consistent and comparable ways to define, assess, and interpret data collection instruments.

In addition, researchers have measured behavioral outcomes using approaches such as structured community activities, which suggests that consistent measurement can be feasible. For example, Armand and colleagues (2020) used structured community activities to simulate real-world situations and measure the appropriateness of choices made by local leaders in Mozambique. Interventions that target a country-wide population (common for some DRG efforts) may be challenging to evaluate against a valid control group; however, for example, staggered program roll-out could be coordinated and measured. Approaches such as synthetic control methods have also been used to evaluate the effects of reforms that are country-wide, such as studies by Arbeláez and colleagues (2021) and Pepinsky and Wihardja (2011).

In addition, mixed-methods evaluations can help to address multiple types of research questions. For example, Shai and colleagues (2020) used a mixed-method approach to evaluate a domestic violence prevention intervention and gain insight into ways in which the program did or did not influence women's and girls' behaviors and family dynamics.

Rigorous qualitative study designs can also be used to enrich and supplement econometric approaches. For example, in light of limited empirical evidence about the effectiveness of gender-responsive budgeting, Bamanyaki and Holvoet (2016) used multiple approaches, including process tracing, to gain insight into how a gender-responsive budgeting program contributed to change in Uganda. Because additional insight into why or how programs lead to results is of value, future research may consider a wide variety of approaches to establish causal attribution, including qualitative designs and methods that have received relatively less attention and are far less frequently applied than quantitative IEs.

Other research considerations identified by high-and medium-confidence SRs

Authors of some SRs have identified **a need to diversify evidence in terms of populations and contexts** such as participants' ages, ethnicity or geographic locations (e.g., MacDonald and Turner 2007; Hanna et al. 2011). Berg and Denison (2013, p.42) also emphasized the importance of disentangling the effects of different elements of multicomponent interventions, and **developing, articulating, and testing theories of change**.

In terms of the quality of quantitative evidence, authors of some SRs found that **some studies did not use sufficiently rigorous research designs to be able to generalize findings to the population of interest**, or few studies discussed the extent that their studies were generalizable (e.g., Rockers and Bärnighausen 2013; Lawry et al. 2016; Higginson et al. 2015; Koper and Mayo-Wilson 2012; Waddington et al. 2019).

Rockers and Bärnighausen (2013) found that included studies had a high risk of bias due to selection bias: concerns about how participants were selected; and other issues, such as whether the same participants were reported on at baseline and endline, or whether primarily self-reported information was used to measure the main outcomes. Lawry and colleagues (2016) also found that many studies were unclear about how participants were selected, among other issues that could lead to overstating positive results.

Higginson and colleagues (2015) observed that some studies did not use matched control groups. Koper and Mayo-Wilson (2012) reported issues such as pre-intervention differences between intervention and comparison areas that could affect results. In addition, Waddington and colleagues (2019) found that few studies considered the extent to which interventions affected women or other populations differently, and that rigorous evaluations generally did not adequately report on intervention design, fidelity of implementation, or conditions across treatment and comparison communities.

The use of rigorous methods requires selecting the best design applicable to the data available and validating the assumptions of the selected method. With regard to the quality of evidence from qualitative designs, researchers need to minimize the inherent risk of bias of these methods, and reviewers need tools and standard procedures to assess the quality of such studies.

DRG evidence: Links to products

Table 7. EGM maps, reports, summaries, and practitioner briefs

	Description of content	RoL	HR	CS	IM	GOV	PC
EGM matrix	A web-based interactive spreadsheet that maps available evidence by intervention sector and outcome of interest	Rule of Law Evidence Gap Map	Human Rights Evidence Gap Map	Strengthening civil society EGM	Independent Media EGM	Good governance through government effectiveness Evidence Gap Map	Political competition through elections Evidence Gap Map
Full report	A full EGM report explaining the map, the methodology/definitions used, and results – including a narrative summary of the research findings from medium- and high-confidence SRs	Rule of Law and Justice: An Evidence Gap Map (forthcoming)	Human Rights: An Evidence Gap Map (forthcoming)	Strengthening civil society: An Evidence Gap Map (forthcoming)	Independent media and free flow of information: An Evidence Gap Map (forthcoming)	Strengthening good governance in low- and middle-income countries: an evidence gap map (forthcoming)	Promoting political competition through elections in low- and middle-income countries: an evidence gap map (forthcoming)
Summary report	A summary of the methods and key findings for each EGM	A summary report on evidence for effective Rule of Law	The effects of human rights interventions on rights-related outcomes	Summary of evidence on strengthening civil society interventions in L&MICs	A summary of evidence on independent media and free flow of information	Strengthening good governance in low- and middle-income countries	Political competition through elections
Practitioner briefs	Pithy and user-friendly overview of the topical area, EGM methods, research findings, and practical implementation considerations for practitioners related to a specific intervention area of the EGM	Systems-level rule of law interventions	Prevent, protect, and respond to human rights violations: Combating trafficking in persons (C-TIP)	Interventions aiming at monitoring public and private institutions via civil society	Disseminating information through media for governance and electoral change	Implementation of tax reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa	Lessons from interventions to strengthen accountability mechanisms and improve voter inclusion
		Society-level rule of law interventions	Approaches to advance human rights through social and behavior change communication	Developing groups for participatory decision-making			
		Services-level rule of law interventions		Strengthening civil society in 'closed' contexts			

Note: RoL = rule of law EGM; HR = human rights EGM; CS = civil society EGM; IM = independent media EGM; GOV = governance EGM; PC = political competition EGM.

Table 8. EGMs user guide, and cross-cutting reviews

	Description of content	Hyperlink
User guide	Clear and user-friendly introduction to the purpose and applications of the EGM, with specific and practical relevance to the user's own work responsibilities	Navigating 3ie's Evidence Gap Maps: A user guide
EGM comparative analysis	Comparative review of the summary reports and the EGM matrices	A comparative analysis of 3ie's evidence gap maps on the democracy, human rights and governance sector
Technology-focused brief	Map and characterization of the evidence-raising key technology issues around the DRG program areas, and identification and synthesis of the evidence available against the three pillars of the "digital democracy" framework	Digital technology for democracy
Women's political empowerment	Characterization and summary of available evidence on all DRG interventions focusing on women's political empowerment through three identified themes: personal, institutional, and social behavior barriers	Lessons from six evidence gap maps on women's political empowerment

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