A Random Evaluation of a Civic Participation Strengthening Program in Rwanda

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(Preliminary results, please do not distribute)

1. Introduction

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) sponsored the Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP) to help the Government of Rwanda improve its performance on the MCC Political Rights, Civil Liberties, and Voice and Accountability eligibility indicators. This paper evaluates one of the five components of RTP, Strengthening Civic Participation (SCP), an initiative with two focus areas: (1) supporting the efforts of civil society organizations to advocate for local issues and (2) training local government officials to increase responsiveness to the concerns and priorities of citizens.

2. Evaluation Design

The interventions under the SCP program were planned to be implemented in all of Rwanda's 30 districts: 15 districts would receive the intervention in Year 1 (Phase I districts) of implementation and the remaining 15 districts would receive the program in Year 2 (Phase II districts). This implementation plan provided an opportunity to select the Phase I districts using a random assignment design and to rigorously evaluate the impacts of the interventions under the SCP program. We used a stratified random assignment process assigning the 30 districts to either Phase I or Phase II. Districts within each province were paired based on district population and density, poverty levels, and other characteristics including district expenditure per capita on good governance programs and social affairs. A public lottery was held to randomly assign districts within each pairing to Phase I, the "treatment group" or Phase II, the "control group". This nationwide selection process was completed in June 2010 and implementation of the program began in March 2011. The intervention was eventually terminated by MCC after the first year of implementation, and only the 15 Phase I districts received the intervention in the end, which allowed us more time to observe impacts.

3. Data Collection

We designed a household survey to collect data for evaluating the impacts of the SCP program and administered it in early 2011 and 2012, before and one year after the start of the program. We used the Expanded Programme of Immunization (Bostoen and Chalabi 2006) Random Walk method to draw nationally representative samples of approximately 10,000 households, one for the baseline and one for the follow-up survey. The Random Walk method was used because the most recent population census in Rwanda was conducted in 2002, and a new enumeration of households would have been prohibitively expensive. To ensure the samples contained an appropriate distribution of gender, age, and other characteristics, an adult respondent age 16 years or older was chosen at random within each selected household.

The baseline and follow-up surveys collected data on respondents' civic participation levels, including awareness and perceptions of local government performance, responsiveness, and accountability. Specifically, respondents were asked more broadly about their awareness of local government meetings, familiarity with local government officials, perceived influence on and

knowledge and access to information about local government affairs. They were also asked about their overall satisfaction with government services related to water infrastructure, local road conditions, waste collection, public schools, and health clinics.

4. Impact Analysis Methods

To assess the impacts of the SCP program of the RTP on our survey's measures of civic participation, we established six different outcome domains using factor analysis. A list of the survey items associated with each outcome index is presented in Table 1. To interpret the impact estimates better, each outcome index was scaled as a binary variable indicating whether a survey respondent's index score was above or below the mean score for the full survey sample in that year. Thus, the impact estimates represent whether the percentage of citizens with above-average outcome index scores in treatment districts is significantly different from the percentage in control districts.[1] Impact estimates are based on regressions of the outcome indices on the treatment indicator, with controls for district-level demographic characteristics and baseline levels of the relevant outcome-index. Standard errors are corrected for the possibility of clustering at the district level.

5. Results

Table 2 summarizes the main impact finding of the SCP program on the outcome indices listed in Table 1. The SCP program did not have a positive impact on any of the survey's civic participation indices. For most outcomes, the impact estimates are negative but not statistically significant for all. Specifically, we find that the program did not have a statistically significant effect on awareness of local government meetings, familiarity with local government officials, or perceived access to government information.

For the satisfaction with local services, perceived citizen influence, and knowledge about local government affairs outcomes, the program had a small negative impact. The SCP program had a statistically significant negative effect of about 2 percentage points on both citizens' perceived influence and citizens' knowledge about local government affairs. We also found that the program resulted in a 4 percentage point reduction in citizens' satisfaction with local services index.

We plan on conducting additional analysis to examine the sensitivity of our main impact findings. We also plan on presenting impacts for different subgroups in our sample, e.g. females and young adults. A discussion of the study's context and contribution to literature will also be included in the completed paper.

[1] As a sensitivity test, we also analyzed impacts using an alternate scale for each outcome index, and the results were similar.

Table 1. List of Survey Items Used to Establish Outcome Indices

Outcomes
Awareness of Local Government Meetings
Aware of public meeting—budget
Aware of public meeting—non-budget
Aware of NGO activity
Aware of JADF
Familiarity with Local Government Officials
Can name the district mayor
Can name at least one member of district council
Can name at least one member of sector council
Can name at least one member of cell council
Satisfaction with Local Services
Satisfied overall with drinking water services
Satisfied overall with local road maintenance
Satisfied overall with local road construction
Satisfied overall with waste collection services
Satisfied overall with education at local schools
Satisfied overall with local health facilities
Citizen Influence
Can influence government policy
Can openly disagree with a government official without negative consequences
Government listens to ordinary citizens
Access to District Government Information
Has access to budget information
Has access to government salary information
Knowledge about Local Government Affairs
Ever received district budget information
Has enough information to assess government performance

Source: Citizen survey (Mathematica 2011 and 2012).

Table 2. Impacts of the Strengthening Civic Participation Program

Civic Participation Indices	Treatment Districts' Index	Control Districts' Index	Difference	Adjusted Difference
Awareness of local government meetings	36.5	36.0	0.5	-1.4
Familiarity with local government officials	51.6	53.0	-1.4	-0.9
Satisfaction with local services	66.4	70.1	-3.7*	-3.9*
Perceived citizen influence	63.6	66.5	-2.9*	-2.2*
Perceived access to government information	36.8	38.9	-2.1*	-1.1
Knowledge about local government affairs	60.5	62.8	-2.3*	-2.0*

Note: Differences measured by regressions of the relevant outcome index on the treatment dummy. The unadjusted difference shows the difference in means between the treatment group and the control group in a regression with no control variables. The adjusted difference controls for districts' baseline demographic characteristics and baseline measures of the relevant outcome index. All regressions used robust standard errors clustered at the district level.

* Statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

Reference:

Bostoen, Kristof, and Zaid Chalabi. “Optimization of Household Survey Sampling Without Sample Frames.” International Journal of Epidemiology, vol. 35, no. 3, June 2006, pp. 751–755.