

Effect of Foundational state design processes, transitional political processes, and election support on political security

Election support interventions, including election campaigns, education events, and governance-strengthening initiatives, have a moderate impact on political security.

Geographic focus: Sub Saharan Africa

Effect: Moderate effect ($g=0.165$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (2 studies with 15 effect sizes)

Short summary

Election support interventions, such as anti-electoral violence campaigns and governance education programs, moderately improved political security. For example, UNMIL Radio in Liberia provided electoral education during the 2011 elections, emphasizing voter rights, civic responsibilities, and peaceful participation. These initiatives increased engagement with government authorities and reduced fear of electoral violence. However, the cell has low confidence due to the limited number of studies, despite consistency in findings across them.

Long summary

The intervention

The interventions focus on electoral education campaigns and governance-strengthening efforts, delivered through mass media and peacekeeping operations. UNMIL Radio programming targeted women's political behaviors and civic participation during Liberia's 2011 elections, covering electoral law, voter education, and rights and responsibilities. Additional interventions involved peace messaging aimed at reinforcing the normative value of peaceful political behavior.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions are expected to work by increasing knowledge of electoral processes, reducing perceived threats of violence, and fostering contact between citizens and government institutions. Evidence indicates that election education increases political participation and government engagement, although it does not consistently affect fear levels or political efficacy. Peace messaging alongside governance education reinforces the legitimacy of non-violent political engagement.

The evidence base

This cell includes two impact evaluations and one qualitative study, all quasi-experimental in design. The studies were conducted in Mozambique, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire, and findings were largely consistent across contexts.

Evidence findings

Election education and governance interventions increased engagement with government authorities and moderately improved political security. One study showed a moderate effect, while the second showed no measurable effect. Overall, evidence indicates that these interventions can strengthen political participation and security, although confidence in the cell remains low due to the limited number of studies. There are 2 impact evaluations and 1 qualitative study in the cell and evidence summaries of the 2 studies are thus provided here:

Mvukiyehe (2017) evidence from a field experiment in rural Liberia. This study assesses the impacts of exposure to electoral programming from broadcast radio on women's political

behaviors and attitudes in the context of the 2011 general elections in Liberia. The intervention focused on five special election programs. Listening groups of women were set up in randomly allocated treatment communities in order to isolate any effects. They met on their own three times per week to listen to a specific electoral program in real time. For the fourth weekly meeting, groups were joined by the staff from the implementing partner organization to listen to and discuss a pre-recorded program. The study is designed as a randomized controlled trial and implemented in 600 households across 20 treatment and control communities. In each community, interviews in 10 of the 15 households were conducted with female respondents and 5 were conducted with male respondents. The study showed that there are largely modest, but consistent positive effects of exposure to UNMIL Radio's elections programs on most outcome indicators (between 1 and 5 percentage points seems to be the most common marginal effect on many outcome indicators, but others also have marginal impacts as high as 9 and 10 percentage points). Only just under half of these estimates are statistically significant at conventional levels, most likely due to a relatively small sample size. Amongst the variables that describe national participation, electoral turnout increased by 9 percentage points for treated women. The study is rated as high confidence.

Smidt (2020) assessed the impact of United Nations peacekeeping operations routinely organizing election education events on violent protests and rioting involving civilians during electoral periods via three pathways in Co[^]te d'Ivoire. These include learning about PKO's electoral security assistance during elections for mitigating fears of election violence; provision of politically relevant information that can strengthen political efficacy and people's ability to make use of peaceful political channels and finally, peace messages during election-education events can change people's calculus about the utility and appropriateness of violent behavior. The study was designed as a quasi-experimental design and data for analysis was obtained from secondary datasets. The statistical analyses support the argument that PKOs' election-education events can mitigate violent protest and rioting ($p < 0.01$) by soothing fears of election violence, reducing political alienation, and delegitimizing violence ($p < 0.01$). Yet election education makes little difference in opposition strongholds and among opposition supporters, who tend to perceive the PKO as biased. The study is rated as low confidence due to quasi-experimental study design, partial definition of intervention, and attrition not being reported in the study.

Confidence assessment

Overall confidence in the cell is low due to the limited number of studies, and the findings show some inconsistency between them.

Other outcomes in the study:

Violence and atrocity prevention / Nature and scale of violence or atrocities / Social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Human security / Physical security