

Effect of Media & Communication on Government Performance

Media interventions had no effect on government performance, transparency, or accountability, with minimal impacts on trust and institutional effectiveness.

Geographical Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Effect: No effect (g=-0.006)

Confidence in this study findings: Low (2 studies with 14 effect size)

Short Summary

Media-focused interventions, such as the Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP) and Voices for Peace project, aimed to improve government performance, transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement through radio programming and community discussions. Overall, these interventions had no effect on perceptions of governance or trust in institutions. While small localized improvements in awareness or dialogue occurred, broader impacts on transparency, fairness, or institutional performance were limited and context-dependent. The cell is rated low confidence due to the small number of studies and variability in results.

Long summary

The Intervention

The Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP) established community radio stations to provide information on transparent governance, aiming to foster civic participation and trust. The Voices for Peace project in Burkina Faso used a 12-week radio drama, *Wuro Potal*, combined with weekly listening sessions and facilitated discussions addressing governance, police-community relations, corruption, and social cohesion. Both interventions relied on media to increase public awareness, encourage dialogue, and promote accountability in governance.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions are designed to influence citizen attitudes and behavior by providing information, modeling positive governance practices, and embedding civic education within engaging narratives. Radio programming and facilitated discussions aim to raise awareness of transparent governance, encourage cooperation with authorities, and reinforce accountability. By combining storytelling with educational messaging, the interventions seek to shift perceptions of government performance and build civic engagement.

Evidence base

The cell includes two primary studies (IE) conducted in Rwanda and Burkina Faso's Sahel region.

Evidence findings

The interventions had no effect on perceptions of government performance, transparency, or accountability. Small context-specific improvements in citizen awareness were observed, but overall statistical impacts were minimal and inconsistent.

Included studies:

The cell consists of two primary studies/IEs and The details of the study summary are provided here.

Nichols-Barrer et al. (2014) evaluated the Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP), an initiative sponsored by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, aimed at improving governance and civil society engagement in Rwanda. The intervention, implemented between 2009 and 2011, included four major components: strengthening the professionalism and accountability of the Rwanda National Police (RNP), enhancing the rule of law through judicial reforms, supporting media professionalism and independence, and increasing civic participation by empowering civil society organizations and local governments. The study was conducted across Rwanda's 416 sectors, providing a nationally representative evaluation of the program's impact on governance indicators, citizen engagement, and access to justice and public services. The diverse settings included rural and urban areas, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how the intervention addressed critical governance challenges in post-conflict Rwanda.

The Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP) found no significant changes in perceptions of the Rwanda National Police (RNP) 's fairness, trustworthiness, or effectiveness. Satisfaction levels remained high (over 75%), and 72% to 88% agreed on the RNP's fairness and consistency across both sector groups. Similarly, satisfaction with local government services declined significantly in treatment districts (by 6 percentage points) compared to no change in control districts. Differences between groups for both outcomes were minimal and not statistically significant. Overall, the study presents medium confidence due to the modest sample size and low engagement levels.

Bilali et al. 2019 evaluated the *Voices for Peace* project, featuring the radio drama *Wuro Potal*, designed to counter violent extremism in Burkina Faso's Sahel region. The intervention aimed to reduce vulnerability to extremism by raising awareness, promoting dialogue, fostering social cohesion, and encouraging collaboration with security forces. Activities included weekly listening sessions in 66 treatment villages over 12 weeks, where participants engaged in 52 episodes addressing issues such as corruption, governance, and police-community relations. Training personnel facilitated group discussions and encouraged reflection on key themes and collective learning. Conducted in Seno Province—the study surveyed 2,904 core participants from 132 villages (66 treatment, 66 control) at baseline and endline, partially including 2,112 network participants.

The radio drama intervention resulted in statistically significant but limited improvements in perceptions of police fairness. Participants exposed to the intervention were slightly more likely to view the police as fair and professional compared to the control group. Similarly, beliefs about collaboration with security forces improving personal or community security showed minimal or negligible change. These results highlight that while the intervention influenced perceptions of fairness to some extent, it failed to impact trust or attitudes toward collaboration with security forces substantially. The study is rated as medium confidence.

Confidence assessment

The cell is rated low confidence due to the limited number of studies.

Other outcomes in this study

Community and state governance/Civic participation

Community and state governance/Access to Justice, Rights & Public Services

Human security/Political security

Human security/Intermediate social cohesion

Violence or atrocity prevention/ Social norms regarding violence or atrocity

Social cohesion/Willingness to participate or help

Social cohesion/Feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity