

Effect of Public sector provision, governance and institutionalization intervention on Access to justice, rights and public services

Evidence shows that horizontal pressure to reform village governance leads to small effects in access to justice, protection of rights, and delivery of public services.

Geographic focus: Sub-Saharan Africa

Effect: Small effect ($g = 0.059$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 12 effect sizes)

Short Summary

Evidence shows that horizontal pressure for reforming village governance had a small effect on access to justice, rights, and public service outcomes in Zimbabwe. The intervention involved training village heads on regulations and conflict management, with one variant also including a civil society leader. Including a civil society leader enhanced governance, reduced political bias in food aid distribution and dispute resolution, and improved dispute management compared to training village heads alone.

Long summary

The intervention

The intervention focused on village-level governance reform in rural Manicaland, Zimbabwe. An international NGO, in partnership with a local NGO, delivered a series of training sessions to village heads on regulations and conflict management “best practices.” The training consisted of two three-day modules, spaced three months apart. One variant trained only the village head, while the second variant included a civil society leader to participate alongside the village head. The intervention aimed to reduce biased decision-making, improve legitimacy, and enhance dispute resolution at the village level.

How the intervention is expected to work

The evidence suggest including a civil society leader in the training sessions improved village governance by enhancing knowledge, adherence to procedures, and attitudes toward citizens’ rights. The civil society leader variant reduced political bias in food aid distribution and dispute resolution and resulted in significantly better dispute management compared to the village head-only variant. This approach created a system of horizontal oversight, fostering accountability and better service delivery.

The evidence base

The cell contains 1 study designed as randomized controlled trial.

The study was conducted in Zimbabwe (1).

Evidence findings

The intervention showed that involving a civil society leader alongside the village head led to improved governance, reduced political bias, and better dispute resolution compared to training village heads alone.. There is 1 impact evaluation in the cell and evidence summaries of the study are thus provided here:

Baldwin (2017) examines the potential for reforming village-level governance in Zimbabwe through horizontal pressure from civil society leaders. The intervention involved training village heads on governance rules and regulations, with a variant that included training a civil society leader alongside the village head. This approach aims to reduce the abuse of power by village heads and improve governance by leveraging the influence of local civil society leaders. The study was conducted in 270 villages in Zimbabwe, randomly assigned to two

intervention variants: one where only the village head was trained, and another where both the village head and a civil society leader were trained. The training sessions were divided into two three-day modules with a three-month gap in between. Surveys were conducted three months after the training to assess the impact on governance outcomes. The inclusion of civil society leaders in the training significantly improved village heads' knowledge and adherence to procedures, with a notable increase in procedural compliance by more than half a standard deviation. The intervention also reduced bias in decision-making, particularly in food aid distribution and dispute resolution, with a 15-percentage point increase in the likelihood of receiving food aid for those with different political views from the village head. Additionally, the presence of civil society leaders increased the perceived legitimacy of village heads among citizens. The study is rated as **low confidence** due to the limited description of the intervention and evaluation questions.

Confidence assessment

Overall low confidence as there is only 1 study in the cell.

Other outcomes in this study:

Social cohesion / Feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity / Willingness to participate or help
Community and state governance / Access to justice, rights, and public services / Civic
Participation

Human security/ Educational security / Intermediate social cohesion outcomes