

## **Effect of Public sector provision, governance and institutionalization intervention on Intermediate Social Cohesion outcomes**

Evidence shows that horizontal pressure for reforming village governance had small effect on information exchange between village head and community leader.

Geographic focus: Sub-Saharan Africa

Effect: Small effect ( $g= 0.035$ )

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 2 effect sizes)

### **Short Summary**

The intervention aimed to reform village governance in Zimbabwe by providing training to village heads on regulations and conflict management. The program was designed to reduce biased decision-making and enhance legitimacy. Two variants of the training were tested: one for village heads only, and another including both village heads and civil society leaders. Including civil society leaders increased communication and information sharing between village heads and community leaders, although the overall effect on intermediate social cohesion outcomes was small. The confidence in the findings is low due to the limited evidence base.

### **Long summary**

#### *The intervention*

The intervention sought to improve governance at the village level through horizontal pressure. An international NGO noted that village heads in rural Manicaland often failed to follow regulations or implement best practices, which reduced legitimacy and decision-making quality. Training sessions were developed to inform participants about the rules governing their activities and techniques for conflict resolution. The program consisted of two three-day modules, with a three-month gap between sessions. One variant targeted only the village head, while the second included a civil society leader to provide social pressure and enhance communication with district administrators. The presence of civil society leaders was intended to improve the exchange of information, accountability, and cooperation between local leaders.

#### *How the intervention is expected to work*

The inclusion of civil society leaders was expected to constrain village heads, improve oversight, and facilitate communication between local leaders and district administrators. Social pressure from respected community figures was intended to encourage compliance with governance norms and enhance information sharing. However, village heads did not perceive a decline in independence from the government, and interactions with district administrators decreased slightly. Despite these limitations, the intervention increased communication and information sharing between village heads and community leaders, albeit modestly.

#### *The evidence base*

The cell contains 1 study designed as a randomized controlled trial. The study was conducted in Zimbabwe (1).

#### *Evidence findings*

The intervention led to a small increase in interactions and information sharing between village heads and community leaders. While the inclusion of civil society leaders strengthened

communication at the local level, it did not significantly improve governance outcomes or alter the broader social dynamics. Overall, the effect on intermediate social cohesion outcomes was small, and the confidence in these findings is low due to the limited number of studies. 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 one low confidence 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