

Effect of Public sector provision, governance and institutionalization intervention on Willingness to participate or help

Horizontal pressure for reforming village governance in Zimbabwe had a **harmful effect** on willingness to participate or help.

Geographic focus: Sub-Saharan Africa

Effect: Harmful effect ($g = -0.131$)

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

Short Summary

The intervention aimed to improve village governance in rural Manicaland, Zimbabwe, by training village heads on regulations and conflict management. Two variants were tested: one where only the village head attended, and another where a civil society leader joined the training. Evidence indicates that these trainings had a harmful effect, reducing community leaders' involvement in distributing food aid, and failing to improve local governance or citizen engagement.

Long summary

The intervention

The intervention applied horizontal pressure for reform through targeted training for village heads. An international NGO observed that many village heads were not following regulations, leading to biased decisions and diminished legitimacy. Trainings were delivered in two three-day modules with a three-month gap. The second variant included a civil society leader alongside the village head to encourage competition and better service provision. However, this approach did not increase civil society leader involvement or improve governance outcomes.

How the intervention is expected to work

The intervention was expected to enhance local governance by creating competition: civil society leaders would offer services alongside village heads, incentivizing both to improve service delivery. In practice, training civil society leaders slightly reduced their involvement in distributing food aid and had minimal impact on residents' willingness to approach them for dispute resolution. Households remained unlikely to seek services from leaders other than the village head, indicating that competition did not materialize as intended..

The evidence base

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

Evidence findings

The study found that the intervention led to reduced community leader involvement in distributing food aid. Training civil society leaders alongside village heads did not enhance local governance or civic participation, and household respondents were slightly less likely to contact civil society leaders for assistance. Overall, the intervention had a harmful effect on willingness to participate or help within the community. 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 one study with low confidence

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