

Effect of Research, Monitoring, and Assessment (RMA) on Civic Participation

RMA interventions showed a harmful effect on civic participation, security monitoring reduced voter coordination, while civic education slightly improved engagement.

Geographical region: Sub-saharan Africa

Effect size: Harmful effect ($g = -0.03$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 3 effect size)

Short summary

A research, monitoring, and assessment (RMA) study in rural Liberia examined the effects of civic education and security monitoring interventions before the 2011 elections. Security monitoring had a harmful effect on civic participation, leading to fragmented voting patterns, while civic education improved voter knowledge and coordination. These findings suggest that while RMA interventions can inform electoral design, security-focused efforts may unintentionally weaken civic cohesion in fragile contexts.

Long summary

Intervention

Two democracy promotion programs were implemented: the Civic Education and Town Hall Program, which provided electoral education and community discussions, and the Security Committee Program, which established local committees with UN peacekeepers to improve electoral security and communication.

How the intervention is expected to work

The interventions aimed to address barriers to electoral participation by improving voter information, coordination, and perceived security. Civic education sought to enhance knowledge and confidence, while security committees were expected to reduce intimidation and promote safe participation.

The evidence base

The cell includes one primary impact evaluation conducted across 142 towns in five Liberian counties-Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, and Nimba.

Evidence findings

The study found that security monitoring had a harmful effect on civic participation by increasing vote fragmentation, whereas civic education improved voter coordination. Overall, the evidence highlights mixed outcomes and low confidence due to the limited number of studies.

Included studies

The impact evaluation assessed the effects of two interventions on civic participation, presenting both individual and combined intervention impacts. A summary of the study is provided here:

Mvukiyeh (2017) examines two democracy promotion interventions in rural Liberia ahead of the 2011 general elections: a civic education program with town halls and a security committee program. Conducted in five counties, the interventions aimed to enhance electoral quality in a post-conflict state marked by fragmented authority and clientelistic systems. The study involved 142 towns, randomly assigned to receive civic education, security interventions, both, or none. Data included polling place results and surveys. The diversity of vote choice, measured via the Herfindahl index, improved modestly in communities exposed to the security committee program ($p < 0.10$), indicating reduced vote monopolization. However, the civic education program produced a coordinated shift in voting, particularly toward national-level candidates such as the Unity Party ($p < 0.01$), reducing parochial voting (-9%; $p < 0.01$). Combined interventions showed similar but weaker effects. Overall, civic education increased voter coordination, while the security program modestly reduced localized influences. These findings underscore the potential of targeted interventions to improve electoral dynamics in fragile, post-conflict democracies. The study is rated as high to medium confidence.

Confidence assessment

Overall, confidence in this cell is low due to the limited number of studies.

Other outcomes in the study

Social cohesion/Willingness to participate or help
Human security/Political security