

Social accountability and service delivery: Evidence from a large-scale experiment in Uganda

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Abstract

We present results from a randomized experiment of a large-scale social accountability program implemented by the government of Uganda and local civil society organizations. We study a sample of 895 communities across the north of the country, 604 of which were randomly selected to receive a six-day training on identifying and reporting mismanagement of a large-scale community-driven development program being implemented in the communities. The study is unique in its size and its integration in a national government program implemented in partnership with civil society organizations. We also employ novel data collections to measure local levels of corruption through the perceptions of public officials, and determine the impact of the program on service delivery, community participation and trust in government. Treated communities report greater monitoring of programs and making more complaints to local and national officials. The program increased project quality by 0.135 standard deviations in the short-run, specifically through a reduction in deaths of animals and increases in overall animal health in livestock projects. 18 months after the program ended, we find that beneficiaries in treatment communities have on average 0.31 more cattle, an increase of 14% over the control group. This represents approximately 31% of the animals that communities received from the program as part of livestock projects. These results are concentrated in areas that are generally considered to be more corrupt by local officials. We also find significant decreases in whether people trust their local community leaders, but increases in trust in the central government. The results suggest that government-led large-scale social accountability interventions can improve service delivery and relations of local communities with central governments.