

Kinship and Women’s Collective Action: Evidence from Patrilineal and Matrilineal Malawi

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Abstract

Globally, women participate in local politics less than men. We focus on one underexplored obstacle: the psychological conditions that enable collective action. As part of a coordinated set of field experiments and drawing on social-psychological theory, we develop a months-long intervention in Malawi designed to foster women’s collective identification, perceived injustice within gender-based hierarchies, and ultimately their collective efficacy. Our intervention increased women’s participation in local politics, with effects varying strikingly by kinship. Counter to our expectations, effects were largest among women practicing patrilineal kinship—a system of descent, residence, and inheritance that structurally disadvantages women—than among women in matrilineal communities. Our findings suggest that interventions targeting the psychological foundations of collective action are especially effective where women face the greatest structural constraints, have fewer preexisting resources, and have less access to gender-based support systems. Our findings underscore how women’s displacement from their natal kin ruptures their collective power.

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Globally, men dominate politics. They hold a majority of national and subnational legislative seats and occupy most executive positions at all levels of government. Men’s dominance is linked to their numerous structural advantages within patriarchal systems: higher levels of formal employment, income, and free time, all of which foster political engagement (Jayachandran, 2015; Brulé, 2023; Ofosu, Seeberg and Wahman, forthcoming). This structural inequality also produces self-reinforcing psychological barriers, such that women may struggle to organize and make demands, even when structural conditions shift in their favor.

In coordination with field experiments in four other field sites around the world, we draw on the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) to develop a months-long intervention in Malawi designed to foster the psychological conditions that orient individuals toward collective political engagement. The SIMCA model posits that group-based collective action unfolds in three phases (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008; Bandura, 2000). First, members of marginalized groups must develop a sense of identification and linked fate with others in their group. Second, they must perceive injustice—a heightened sense of relative deprivation rooted in existing power structures. Third, they must develop collective efficacy: the belief that the group can effect change through coordinated action. Together, these conditions constitute the psychological infrastructure for collective action. Following intensive in-country piloting, we developed training materials designed to cultivate all three, with materials specific to our study site in rural Malawi.

We theorized that the efficacy of our intervention might depend on the social structures already surrounding women. Malawi is home to both matrilineal and patrilineal communities. Under *matrilineal* kinship, descent and familial belonging are traced through the mother; inheritance commonly passes through the female line; and married couples typically reside with the wife’s natal family. These practices tend to give women greater access to land, kin-based support networks, and stronger exit options from marriage. By contrast, *patrilineal* kinship traces descent through the father, resulting in patrilineal inheritance, residence with the father’s natal family, and the payment of bride price. These arrangements weaken women’s ties to their own natal kin, reduce their control over productive resources, and reinforce male authority within households and communities. Past research has found that such kinship differences shape the degree of women’s political engagement and influence, giving matrilineal women a distinct advantage (Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021; Brulé and Gaikwad, 2021; Lowes, 2022; Neupert-Wentz, Schuessler and Seeberg, 2026). We posit that kinship also shapes the degree to which women already possess—or are denied—the collective networks and solidarity that SIMCA-based interventions are designed to build.

To test our expectations, we implemented a randomized controlled trial to encourage women’s

participation in local politics in two rural districts in Malawi.¹ Our intervention randomized facilitated trainings for existing women’s village savings and loan associations (VSLAs). In both the treatment and control groups ($\approx 4,000$ women in ≈ 200 groups), women participated in a preliminary general information session on the provision of local government services. Those in the treated VSLAs attended additional intensive training sessions over several months, designed to cultivate the SIMCA conditions in a group-based setting.

Women who participated in the training demonstrated and reported higher levels of political participation than women in the information-only control group.² On our key behavioral measure, women in treated VSLAs were 38 percent more likely than women in control VSLAs to apply for government funding for a community project. The grants they submitted were also of higher overall quality (as assessed by treatment-blind, in-country evaluators), and women in treated communities were more likely to report that local elites responded to their needs. Women in treated VSLAs also reported higher levels of formal, informal, and mediated political participation than women in control VSLAs, as well as higher levels of self-efficacy, more frequent discussions of politics with community members outside their immediate families, and greater knowledge of local political procedures.

We next examine how kinship shaped both baseline participation and responsiveness to the intervention. We had hypothesized that matrilineal women—who have greater resources and higher baseline levels of political participation—would be more responsive to the training. We find the opposite: effects are observed *only* in patrilineal communities, where kinship practices are most exclusionary toward women. These findings suggest that the training was most effective for women with fewer preexisting resources and less access to established gender-based support systems. Our results thus suggest that patrilineal women, displaced from their natal kin and separated from the collective networks that might otherwise sustain political action, had the most to gain from this group-based intervention.

Taken together, our findings indicate the promise of interventions that address the group-based social-psychological barriers preventing women from participating in local politics. We find evidence largely consistent with the SIMCA framework: women in treated communities report heightened perceptions of injustice and stronger collective efficacy—the two psychological mechanisms most proximate to collective action. These findings contribute to a growing literature that uses causal inference techniques to understand the drivers of women’s political participation (e.g. [Wilke et al., 2025](#); [Cheema et al., 2023](#); [Prillaman, 2023](#); [Van der Windt, Humphreys and de la Sierra, 2018](#)), adding rare evidence that psychologically-oriented interventions can produce durable behavioral change at scale.

Our work also contributes to the growing body of research on variation in women’s experiences

¹This was part of a coordinated set of field experiments in five countries ([Redacted, 2026](#)). The working paper reporting the meta-analysis of all five experiments is in SI Section [H](#).

²The meta-analytic paper, included in SI Section [H](#), reports results for all five field settings.

by kinship practices (Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021; Brulé and Gaikwad, 2021; Lowes, 2022; Brulé, 2023; Robinson, 2024; Neupert-Wentz, Schuessler and Seeberg, 2026). Prior work documents that matrilineal women exhibit greater baseline political engagement; we show that this advantage also shapes how women respond to efforts to build collective power. The intervention was most effective precisely where women faced the greatest structural exclusion. This observed heterogeneity in our treatment effects has implications beyond our study site: it suggests that interventions targeting the psychological foundations of collective action may be most effective not where preexisting resources are greatest, but where they are most scarce. Women’s groups, in other words, may serve a compensatory function, filling the gap left by the rupture of natal networks that patrilocal residence imposes.

The Psychological Foundations of Collective Action

The Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) provides a psychological account of how members of marginalized groups mobilize for political change (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008). Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 2004), SIMCA posits that collective action is most likely when three psychological conditions are met: group members develop a strong sense of shared identity and linked fate with others in their group; they perceive the group’s disadvantaged position as unjust; and they develop collective efficacy—the belief that coordinated group action can produce change (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008; Bandura, 2000). A meta-analysis of 182 studies found that each pathway independently predicts collective action, with collective efficacy emerging as the strongest predictor (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008).

Most work on women’s political participation has not examined the barriers specific to women’s *collective* mobilization, but instead focuses on either individual constraints (e.g., unequal access to resources) (Schlozman, Burns and Verba, 1994), family barriers (e.g., male family members as gatekeepers) (e.g., Cheema et al., 2023; Khan, 2021), bias and discrimination (Clayton et al., 2020), or gender roles and expectations in broader society (Jayachandran, 2015). Moreover, foundational research on women’s collective organizing tends to emphasize the structural features of group organizing (e.g., expanded networks) rather than the psychological changes these spaces can engender (Htun and Weldon, 2018). Still, this work often hints at mechanisms that align with SIMCA. For instance, Prillaman (2023) shows that women’s self-help groups in rural India close gender gaps in political participation by building solidarity and a shared purpose among women who would otherwise act individually. Our contribution is to provide a randomized evaluation of an intervention that specifically seeks to foster the psychological dimensions of SIMCA while holding “groupness” constant across women’s groups that either receive the intervention or continue meeting without it.

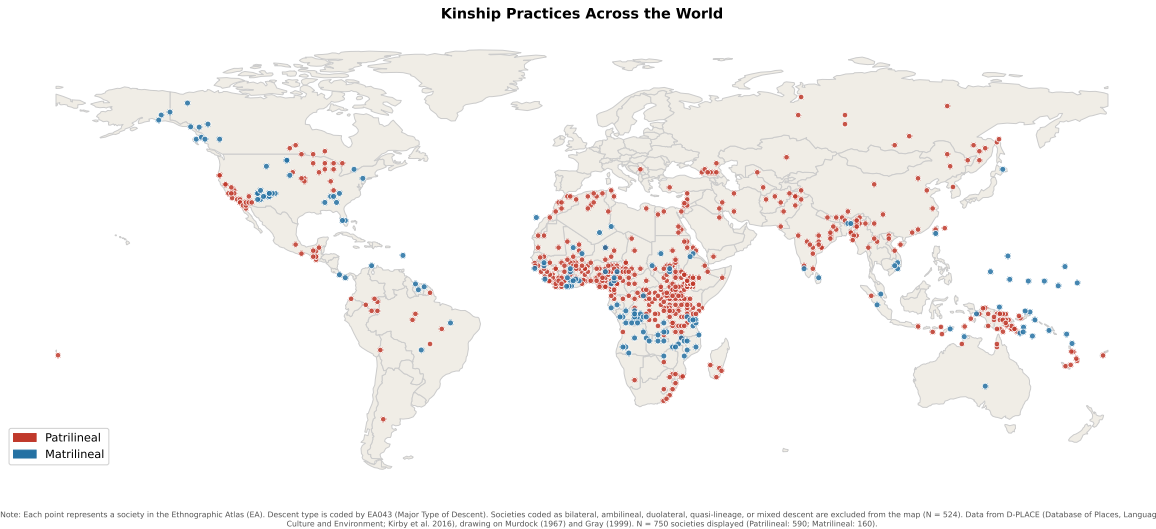


Figure 1: Distribution of Patrilineal and Matrilineal Societies Worldwide. Note: Each point represents a society in the Ethnographic Atlas. Data drawn from D-PLACE (Database of Places, Language, Culture and Environment; Kirby et al. (2016), based on Murdock (1967) and Gray (1999). N = 750 societies displayed (Patrilineal: 590; Matrilineal: 160).

Kinship Systems and Women’s Political Participation

Our study sites also contain variation in kinship practices that may affect the effectiveness of our intervention. Malawi is home to both matrilineal and patrilineal groups. Matrilineal kinship traces descent and familial belonging through the mother, whereas patrilineal kinship traces them through the father. Matrilineality, while less common than patrilineality, is found in every region of the world—around 13 percent of societies globally (Murdock, 1967)—but is slightly more common in Africa (17 percent), with a particular concentration in the “matrilineal-belt” in the south-central region of the continent (Davison, 1997; Richards, 1950).³ Figure 1 shows the distribution of historically matrilineal and patrilineal societies around the world. Malawi lies within Africa’s matrilineal belt, and as a result, the majority of the country’s ethnic groups traditionally practice matrilineal kinship and matrilineal residence. However, some ethnic groups, especially in Malawi’s northern region, practice patrilineal kinship, patrilineal residence, and bride price (*lobola*).⁴

While there is variation in the cultural and economic consequences of matrilineal kinship, it often shapes inheritance, with land or other family assets being passed from women to their daughters or from men to their sisters’ sons (Schneider and Gough, 1961). Some matrilineal societies also practice matrilocality, in which married couples reside in the wife’s natal home (Schneider and Gough, 1961; Davison, 1997). Both practices are expected to empower women. Women may be empowered directly

³It is not well-understood why certain societies practice matrilineal descent, but some scholars argue that all African societies were originally matrilineal (Saidi, 2010), only transitioning to patrilineal kinship with the introduction of animal husbandry (Holden and Mace, 2003).

⁴The presence of patrilineal kinship practices in Malawi is generally attributed to the arrival of the Ngoni ethnic group from farther south in the wake of the Zulu wars (*mfecane*) of the early nineteenth century (Phiri, 1983).

through increased access to positions of authority, such as village heads or clan leaders (Colson, 1951; Ntara, 1977; Peters, 1997; Phiri and Vaughan, 1977).⁵ More commonly, however, women benefit indirectly from matrilineal kinship, even when men retain most formal decision-making authority (Peters, 1997). Matrilineal systems typically provide women with greater access to land and other assets, reducing their dependence on their husbands. They also sustain women’s access to kin support, either through matrilocal residence or durable ties to their natal family (Vaughan, 1987). Together, these features enhance women’s intra-household bargaining power *vis-à-vis* their spouses (Lowes, 2022; Phiri, 1983; Schatz, 2002).⁶

Evidence from both Malawi and beyond indicates that women’s political participation and representation is higher in groups that observe matrilineal kinship and inheritance (Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021; Brulé and Gaikwad, 2021; Lowes, 2022; Neupert-Wentz, Schuessler and Seeberg, 2026). This enhanced political engagement is attributed to “spillover” from their greater influence in both local and familial decision-making, as well as socialization into a more progressive set of norms about appropriate gender roles and expectations (Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021). Given our interest in how kinship might moderate our treatment, we conducted our study in areas characterized by either matrilineal or patrilineal kinship.

Our pre-registered expectation was that the intervention would be more effective among matrilineal women. This hypothesis rested on two related intuitions. First, we expected that matrilineal women, who enjoy greater access to land, kin-based support networks, and stronger exit options from marriage, would have the baseline resources necessary to translate psychological change into political action. Interventions that shift attitudes and build collective efficacy may require a minimum threshold of material capacity and social support to produce behavioral change. Without these foundations, even women who develop a stronger sense of injustice or group solidarity could find structural constraints too difficult to overcome. Second, matrilineal women’s higher baseline levels of political engagement could mean they are more readily mobilized; already closer to the participation threshold, and thus easier to move. By contrast, we worried that the structural disadvantages facing patrilineal women—displacement from natal kin, weakened social networks, reduced control over resources, and reinforced male authority within households and communities—would prove too constraining for a months-long psychological intervention to overcome. In short, we expected the intervention to work where preexisting conditions were most conducive and to be less effective where they were least so.

⁵This relative increase in women holding positions of power should not be equated with matriarchy, or rule by women. Indeed, many matrilineal societies practice avuncular power, in which men maintain strong ties to their natal families, and maternal uncles have stewardship over their sisters’ children.

⁶This is most evident under matrilocal residence, but likely holds regardless of residence location, as matrilineal women generally retain stronger exit options than patrilineal women, for whom bridewealth payments often constrain return to the natal home following marital dissolution or a spouse’s death (Schatz, 2002, 2005).

The Setting: Local Governance in Malawi

We are interested in women’s participation in local politics in Malawi, which involves their engagement within a decentralized system of development planning and local budgeting organized into a hierarchical set of local governing bodies. These bodies include Village Development Committees (VDCs), which operate at the Group Village level and are nested within Area Development Committees (ADCs), which operate at the Traditional Authority (TA) level. Final development decisions are made by District Councils, the highest level of local government ([Chiweza, 2016](#); [Chasukwa, Chiweza and Chikapa-Jamali, 2014](#)).

VDCs are the smallest units and the representative bodies for a village or a group of villages. The committees are expected to facilitate community-level planning and development through regular exchanges with residents. By law, development priorities should be determined through citizen input at the VDC level and then incorporated into ADC-level development plans, which are ultimately funded by district governments. However, in practice, VDC members are often appointed by traditional authorities (chiefs), with limited citizen input in local decision-making and vast discrepancies between village-level priorities and district spending ([Chiweza, 2016](#); [Maiden, Brown Guzman and Bleck, 2020](#)).

A lack of transparency in service provision has led to significant public disillusionment with local government. In 2024-2025, nearly 60 percent of Malawians disapproved of their local councilor’s performance ([Afrobarometer, 2025](#)), and only 15 percent of incumbents were reelected in a recent election ([Chiweza, Chunga and Chunga, 2021](#)). The unpopularity of local councilors is partly due to citizens’ lack of input into local decision-making. Asked how much of the time they thought that councilors “try their best to listen to what people like you have to say,” 77 percent of Malawians said that their political representatives “never” or “only sometimes” listen to their views ([Afrobarometer, 2025](#)). A second driver of low citizen engagement with local governance is uncertainty about the roles, capacities, and processes of service-delivery planning and financing at the local level ([Chinsinga, 2008](#); [O’Neil and Cammack, 2014](#)). For example, more than two-thirds of Malawians doubted that they could access district development plans and budgets, despite such access being guaranteed by law ([Afrobarometer, 2017](#)).

Empirical Strategy: Sites, Sampling, and Outcomes

Our intervention, designed in collaboration with teams working in four other country contexts ([Redacted, 2026](#)), consists of a series of group-based training sessions. In our case, the intervention was delivered to preexisting village savings and loan associations (VSLAs). VSLAs in Malawi provide one of the few sources of financing for rural residents. Typically, members of a VSLA make savings contributions to a

selected three new members to join each group.⁹ We collected baseline and endline survey data from both preexisting and new group members. Most VSLAs had approximately twenty members, from whom we randomly selected fourteen to interview.¹⁰ In total, the experimental sample comprises 3,970 women, with 2,025 in the control group and 1,945 in the treatment group.

Members of all groups (treatment and control) attended an initial informational meeting, at which we provided information on local council mandates and funding. We did this to ensure that any subsequent effects would not be driven by women in treated VSLAs having more procedural knowledge of how government works than women in control VSLAs. After this initial meeting, we block-randomized VSLAs into treatment or control groups based on information collected in the baseline survey.¹¹ Treatment groups then received three additional facilitated sessions designed around the SIMCA framework. Control groups did not receive additional training sessions but continued to meet for their regular VSLA activities. We collaborated with two partners in Malawi to implement these training sessions. The first was our data collection partner, the Institute of Public Opinion Research (IPOR), based in Zomba, Malawi. In addition to collecting baseline and endline data, IPOR staff worked extensively with our implementing partner, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), to develop the protocol, train facilitators, and ensure the quality of the training exercises.

We tailored our training and outcome measures to align with existing local government structures in the country, as described above. Our primary behavioral measure of political participation is whether participants applied for public funding for a community project. The community grant was distributed through the Village Development Committees. These grants were open to all residents of the two study districts, and residents applied through their local VDCs. All grant submissions were first reviewed by the VDCs, which selected three grants to forward to the ADC. The ADC reviewed these submissions and forwarded its recommendations to the District Council, which decided on and awarded the final projects. Additionally, two treatment-blind Malawian research assistants evaluated each grant proposal for its relevance, quality, and clarity.

The Intervention

Those in the treated VSLAs participated in additional training sessions aligned with the SIMCA framework. The three additional facilitated training sessions were held monthly for three months and

⁹Our experimental sample includes all of the women who attended the first session, whether they were “invited” or not. In practice, many women who were on the generated lists of new names but were randomized not to receive an invitation also attended the first session, and many of the invited women did not attend. Our results are robust to the exclusion of non-invited women (see SI Section F).

¹⁰In groups with fewer than fourteen members, we interviewed all members. The smallest group consisted of eight preexisting members, and the largest group comprised 43.

¹¹We block-randomized into treatment or control by: Traditional Authority, community remoteness, size of the VSLA, degree of VSLA activity, degree of VSLA members’ political engagement, and kinship practices.

were intensive, each lasting approximately half a day.¹² The session's activities focused on three main principles:

Group identification and linked fate: Participants were guided through exercises that helped them identify and enumerate shared values and experiences related to their identity as women (and wives, mothers, etc., as applicable). Participants were encouraged to reflect on how this shared identity influenced their priorities for service delivery in their community. For example, in an activity mapping exercise, facilitators asked participants to reflect on the activities their families had completed the previous day and then, as a group, categorize them by the performer's gender. The facilitator then led participants in a discussion about how their identity as women contributed to the division of household and village labor.

Perceived injustice: Participants were asked to draw on their own experiences and observations to assess the influence that women in their community have relative to men in shaping local government decision-making and service delivery priorities. For example, in a gatekeeper listing exercise, women listed all community figures who held power and to whom they had to seek permission to access a good or service. The facilitator then led a discussion on identifying the gender of community gatekeepers and the implications for women's equal access to community resources. The moderator then guided the conversation to help women identify shared grievances, particularly regarding service delivery. The goal was to transform the recognition of relative deprivation into feelings of grievance, thereby generating greater demand for government action. For example, as one of these tasks, the facilitators returned to the activity mapping exercise and led the women in a discussion of whether they believed the division of labor was fair or unfair.

Collective efficacy: The workshop series concluded with activities that enabled participants to brainstorm concrete ways in which women could act collectively to increase their influence in local government decision-making. For example, during a lobbying exercise, women formed groups and selected a community issue on which to lobby key gatekeepers. To address the community issue they selected, participants developed a list of affected individuals, a list of relevant gatekeepers, and a common message to be conveyed to the identified gatekeepers. They then role-played delivering their request to community leaders.

Throughout the sessions, participants learned concrete methods for identifying community needs and mobilizing broad input. They received training in engaging local authorities to address their needs in both the public and private sectors, including skills in demand articulation, effective persuasion, and public speaking (for related approaches, see McGinn, Low and Ashraf, 2014; Ashraf et al., 2018;

¹²As is customary, participants were provided with refreshments throughout the day.



Figure 3: Example training materials.

Johnson, 2020). We piloted our training materials intensively in-country and trained facilitators over several days. We also hired an in-country graphic designer and adapted our materials to maximize comprehension and engagement, particularly in contexts with high rates of illiteracy. For example, Figure 3 illustrates training materials from an exercise in which women, through a group discussion, identify and articulate when they feel they have power. We include the complete training guide in SI Section G.

We expected that participation in the treated VSLAs would increase women’s political participation relative to women in the control VSLAs. We further anticipated that the training would enhance the quality of women’s participation, making their requests realistic, relevant, coordinated, and aligned with local government decision-making. Consistent with the SIMCA mechanisms, we also anticipated the intervention to increase women’s gender-based identification, feelings of relative deprivation, and perceptions of collective efficacy. We also expected that members of the treated VSLAs would be more likely to share a common understanding of their villages’ key needs and to attempt to communicate those needs and demands to local village elites. Finally, responding to this increase in women’s collective mobilization, we anticipated that local elites would be more responsive to women’s priorities in treated VSLAs than in control VSLAs.

SIMCA Trainings Increase Women’s Political Participation

Figure 4 reports our headline results. For each outcome, it shows both the difference in means estimates (indicated as DIM in red) and the estimates from OLS models that include preregistered covariates (in blue).¹³

¹³Estimates are produced using the pre-specified Lin (2013) estimator, which centers specified pre-treatment covariates by subtracting each covariate’s mean and interacting each with the treatment.

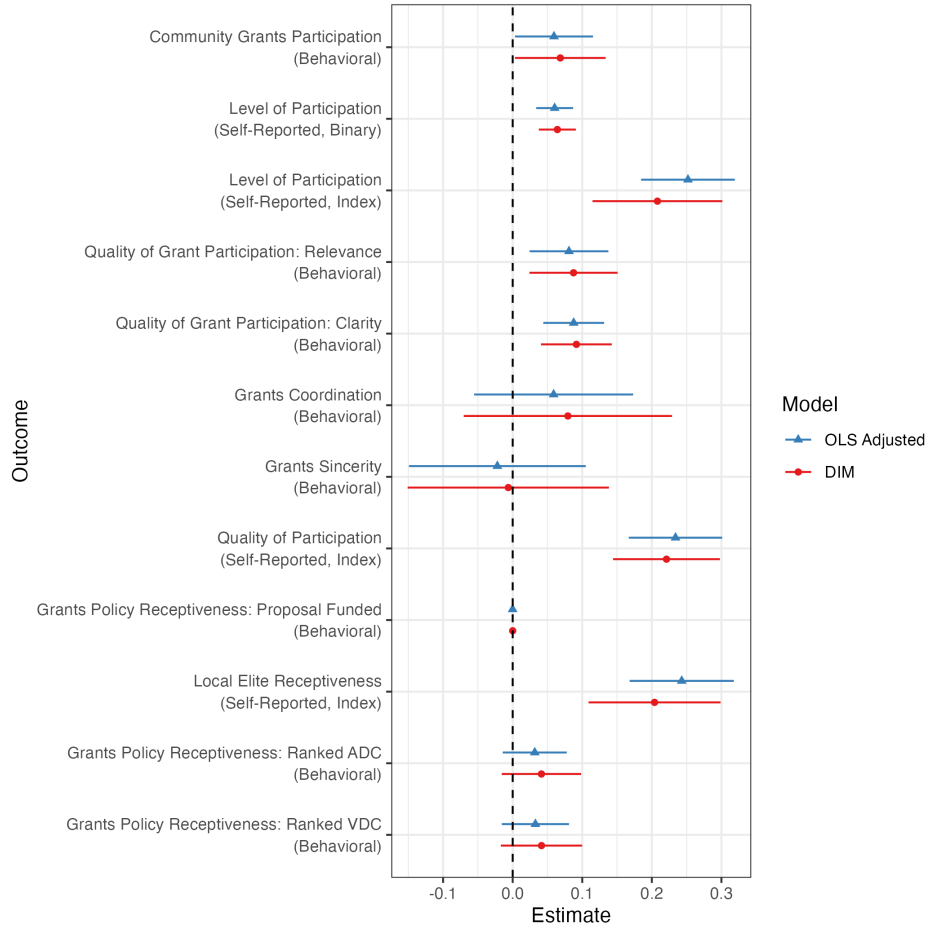


Figure 4: Differences in means (DM) and covariate-adjusted OLS models for headline outcomes.

Our primary behavioral measure is whether a respondent applied for a community grant. Recall that as part of our intervention, we administered a development grant through the local government. These grants totaled 10,000 USD ($\approx$ 17.3 million Malawian Kwacha) and were awarded to ten projects across the two districts (1,000 USD per project). The grants were widely advertised throughout the two study districts by the Village Development Committees and District Extension Workers. Individuals were asked to apply for a community project (e.g., a new borehole, a new school roof) through their local VDC. The grants were ranked by members of the VDC and then forwarded to the ADC, which in turn submitted them to the District Councils for final decision. The grant competition was extremely popular: VDCs within the two districts, including villages both within and outside our study sites, received nearly 2,500 grant applications.

Our primary behavioral outcome is a binary indicator equal to 1 if the respondent was the sponsor or co-sponsor of a grant proposal, and 0 otherwise. Figure 4 shows that women in treated VSLAs are 5.9 percentage points more likely than women in control VSLAs to have participated in the grants

competition ($p = 0.038$).¹⁴ This represents a 38 percent increase compared to women in control communities (of whom 15.4 percent were sponsors or co-signatories on grants).

As a secondary measure of political participation, we collected several self-reported outcomes to construct a political participation index.¹⁵ Figure 4 shows the effect of treatment both on a binary measure of this index and on the full index in standardized units. We find significant treatment effects using both measures. For the binary measure, women in treated VSLAs were 6.03 percentage points more likely to participate in at least one political activity than women in control VSLAs ($p < 0.001$). Using the standardized measure, women in treated VSLAs report 0.25 standard deviations higher levels of political activity than those in the control group ($p < 0.001$).

Figure 4 also displays several additional analyses related to the quality of women’s political participation. Based on assessments from in-country, treatment-blind coders, grants submitted by women in treatment VSLAs had higher levels of clarity (straightforward requests) and relevance (within the purview of local government) than those submitted by women in control VSLAs (both values were significant at $p \leq 0.05$).¹⁶ Women in treated VSLAs were more likely to submit grants together (coordination), though the estimate is not statistically significant. We also find that women in treated VSLAs report 0.23 standard deviations higher levels of participation quality than those in the control group ($p < 0.001$).

We next consider the treatment’s impact on responsiveness to women’s political action. Our primary behavioral measure here is whether a grant was ultimately funded. Within each district, only five grants were selected for funding, meaning fewer than one percent of the more than 2,500 applications ultimately received funding. Only two grants with women from our study sites as cosignatories were funded (one in the treatment group and one in the control group), rendering the treatment effect null. In a more localized measure of policy responsiveness, we find that women in treated VSLAs were slightly more likely (by 3.27 percentage points) to have sponsored or cosigned a grant selected by the VDC for forwarding to the ADC than those in the control group, but this difference is not statistically significant. Finally, our endline survey also asked women to self-report how responsive they felt local elites were to their needs. On a standardized index that included outcomes unrelated to the grant competition (e.g., satisfaction with responses from local elites during village meetings and informal interactions), we find that women in treated VSLAs report 0.24 standard deviations higher levels of

¹⁴Following our PAP, we report the OLS-adjusted estimates in the text, which are broadly similar to the DIM estimates reported concurrently in the figures.

¹⁵Following the PAP, we constructed a political participation index based on women’s formal (e.g., attending village meetings), informal (e.g., having the telephone number of a village leader), and mediated (e.g., asking someone to speak on one’s behalf at a meeting) forms of political participation. The binary measure of political participation takes the value 1 if women reported participating in at least one form of political participation.

¹⁶We include the inter-rater reliability (IRR) in SI Section A. These ratings are based on the assessments of two coders and are relatively low, which we believe stems from one coder being a more astute assessor than the other. Based on our pre-specifications, we use the higher of the two ratings and, accordingly, do not include coder fixed effects.

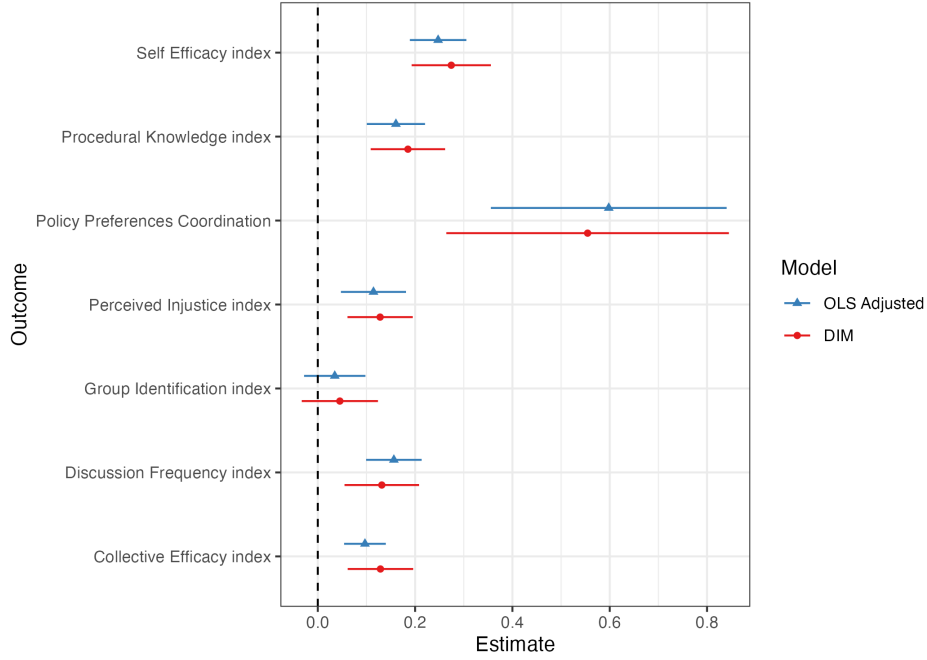


Figure 5: Differences in means (DM) and covariate-adjusted OLS models for mechanisms.

responsiveness than women in control VSLAs ($p < 0.001$).

Psychological Pathways to Political Action

Our survey included questions designed to measure mechanisms associated with the SIMCA framework, as well as other mechanisms plausibly related to the intervention. Figure 5 displays the treatment effects for each pre-specified measure. Each measure is constructed from an index based on self-reported responses to endline survey questions. Treatment effects are displayed in standard deviations.

The three mechanisms associated with the SIMCA framework are group identification, perceived injustice, and collective efficacy. We find support for the latter two: perceived injustice and collective efficacy. While we also observe a small positive treatment effect (0.04 standard deviations) on the group identification measure, this is the only mechanism for which the difference between the treatment and control communities is not statistically significant. We note that this may be due to several composite questions having very high values in both the treated and control communities, suggesting ceiling effects. For example, on a 0-3 scale, both women in the treated and control VSLAs report an average of 2.9 when answering the question, "How important is being a woman to you?" Put differently, it may be that this mechanism was already present in our study sites, allowing the intervention to activate the two subsequent mechanisms that are more proximate to collective action. We also find positive treatment effects on other plausible mechanisms we pre-registered, which may have facilitated the SIMCA framework or operated independently: self-efficacy (as distinct from collective efficacy),

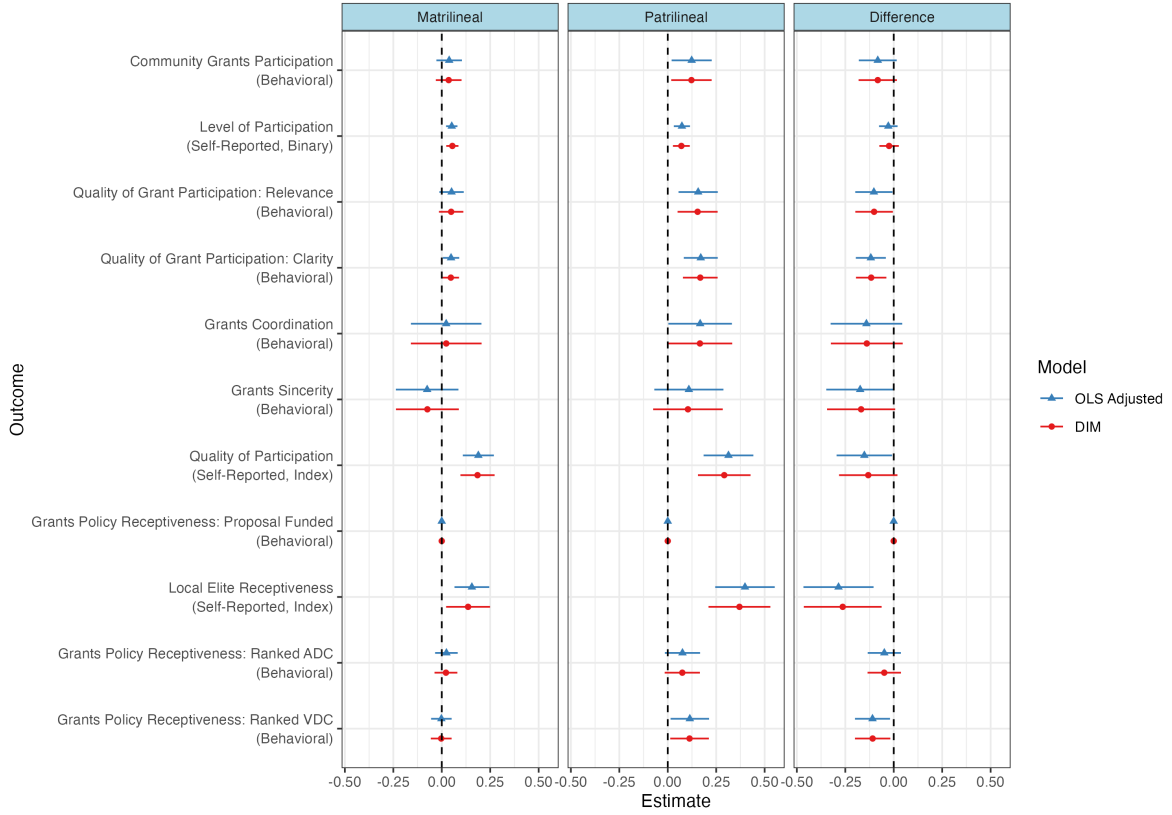


Figure 6: Headline treatment effects across matrilineal v. patrilineal areas.

knowledge of local government procedures, preference coordination, and political discussion frequency (all significant at $p \leq 0.05$).

Differences across Kinship Systems

We had anticipated that the intervention would have a greater effect in communities that practice matrilineal kinship and matrilineal residence, as well as among women who adhere to these customs (given individual-level variation). We expected that matrilineal women would be better able to overcome the significant barriers (both psychological and material) to participate more actively in village governance, and thus, the training would be especially effective for this group.

Instead, we find the opposite. Our treatment effects are larger in patrilineal areas and among women who practice patrilineal kinship. Figure 6 shows our headline results based on an individual-level measure of matrilineal kinship (whether the respondent reported that her children belonged to the mother's family). Panel 1 shows the difference in means and OLS adjusted treatment effects among matrilineal respondents, while Panel 2 shows the same among patrilineal respondents. Panel 3 shows the interaction effect between matrilineality and the treatment (i.e., the difference between Panels 1 and 2). Across outcome measures, treatment effects are driven by women who report patrilineal

kinship. We observe similar patterns when assessing kinship using other traits, such as matrilocality or bride price (*lobola*), and when we derive a continuous measure from factor analysis across these traits (see SI Section D).¹⁷ The heterogeneity by kinship is also robust to the inclusion of district fixed effects, which is important as kinship is conflated with geography in our study site. In SI Section D, we also examine heterogeneity by kinship *within* each of the two districts. This analysis suggests that our findings cannot be explained by variation between the two districts, as we observe similarly stronger treatment effects among patrilineal women within the district where this kinship practice is most prevalent (Mzimba).¹⁸

Although this was not our preregistered expectation and kinship is plausibly correlated with many other baseline characteristics, we can speculate on why we might observe more substantial effects among patrilineal women. Patrilineality and patrilocality are the most common forms of kinship practiced worldwide (Brulé, 2023). In these systems, a family’s wealth and resources, including children, are considered part of the man’s family. In patrilocal traditions, a woman’s family typically receives a bride price (*lobola* in Malawi), and she will live with her husband and his family after marriage, often in a servile position to her mother-in-law (see Kandiyoti, 1988; Brulé and Gaikwad, 2021; Robinson, 2024). This dispossesses women of their familial networks and frequently makes young brides “strangers” in their husbands’ villages.

The SIMCA model operates by fostering a sense of group-based consciousness and connection among individuals who have historically been marginalized. Although we had speculated that women with preexisting networks of matrilineal communities might face fewer barriers to effective participation in our training, it may be that our training was most effective in places where women were most severed from their natal communities and thus had the fewest pre-existing connections with other women. For patrilineal women, building collective efficacy in solidarity with other women may have been more meaningful than in matrilineal communities, where these connections between women were never ruptured, and, as we observe, women’s informal political participation is already higher. The fact that the four other study sites in this coordinated set of field experiments are also in areas that primarily practice patrilineality further suggests that such interventions are most effective in places where kinship practices favor men (Redacted, 2026).

¹⁷An analysis of potential mechanisms through kinship practices reveals little difference between matrilineal and patrilineal groups. Only one mechanism measure, frequency of discussion, shows a real difference by kinship (see SI Section D.4). This suggests that the stronger effects of the intervention among patrilineal women may simply be driven by lower baseline participation levels in patrilineal communities.

¹⁸Kinship is also confounded by ethnicity. Matrilineality is more prevalent among the Yao and Lhomwe in Zomba District, while patrilineality is more common among the Ngoni and Tumbuka in Mzimba District. Given the number of ethnic groups at our study site and the more limited within-ethnicity variation on this measure, we are unable to conduct within-ethnicity tests of this moderator.

Lessons for Increasing Women’s Collective Power

Consistent with findings from four other countries with coordinated interventions, we find that a group-based intervention aimed at the psychological constraints on collective action can increase women’s participation in local politics. Although an exhaustive test of mechanisms is beyond the scope of our design, we find evidence consistent with psychological drivers associated with the SIMCA framework. Our months-long training program led women through exercises designed to foster their shared identities as women, mobilize collective grievances, and cultivate a new orientation toward collective change. We find evidence that the program facilitated these cognitive processes and increased women’s collective participation in their communities’ political life. Contrary to our expectations, the months-long training was most effective among women in patrilineal communities, where kinship practices systematically advantage men and women’s baseline levels of political participation are lowest. In these settings, the intervention may have provided women with new sites of collective power that had been displaced by patrilineal/patrilocal kinship practices. Although this heterogeneity was not anticipated and our interpretation is necessarily speculative, it has important implications for our study’s external validity. Because most societies globally are patrilineal, including those in the other experimental sites in this coordinated study, these heterogeneous effects suggest that interventions of this kind may be especially effective in the modal kinship context.

While our findings support the efficacy of group-based interventions designed to close gender gaps in political participation, programs focused on women’s beliefs and behaviors may have limited effects without complementary efforts to address the structural barriers they face. Our intervention, for example, did not alter the social and economic systems that confer power on men (e.g., gendered social roles) or grant them greater control over resources, time, and decision-making. Moreover, the group-based empowerment generated by our training may fade without sustained investment and institutional responsiveness in settings where state capacity remains limited and political institutions continue to favor already powerful groups (see, e.g., [Robinson and Seim, 2018](#)).

Because structural inequality and women’s political exclusion reinforce one another, we suspect that interventions that address both are likely to have the greatest impact. Expanding women’s political participation may require not only supporting women’s engagement but also changing the institutions and incentives that shape access to political power, including interventions directed at male gatekeepers and local elites (see [Ofosu, Seeberg and Wahman, forthcoming](#); [Piscopo, 2019](#)) and reforms that reduce barriers to women’s influence (see, e.g., [Heinze, Brulé and Chauchard, 2025](#); [Cheema et al., 2023](#); [Clayton and Anderson-Nilsson, 2021](#); [Johnson, 2020](#); [Brulé, 2020](#)). Likewise, combining efforts to mobilize women citizens with initiatives that increase women’s representation in elected office may generate reinforcing gains by strengthening women’s collective political voice (also see [Goyal, 2024](#);

Wahman, Frantzeskakis and Yildirim, 2021). Together, these complementary efforts are more likely to produce lasting reductions in gender inequalities in political power than either approach alone.

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Supplementary Information for
“Kinship and Women’s Collective Action:
Evidence from Patrilineal and Matrilineal Malawi”

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A Inter-Rater Reliability

Outcome	Kappa	Z-Stat	P-Value	N	Raters
Grant Relevance	0.12	10.07	0.00	2476	2
Grant Clarity (Writing)	0.12	9.56	0.00	2476	2
Grant Clarity (Needs)	0.17	13.26	0.00	2476	2
Grant Clarity (Logical)	0.02	1.59	0.11	2476	2

Table SI.1: Inter-Rater Reliability (Quality of Grants)

B VSLA-Level Estimates

Table SI.2: VSLA-Level Raw Difference in Means: Grant Outcomes

Outcome	Control Mean	Treatment Mean	Difference	SE	<i>p</i> -value
Community Grants Participation	0.155	0.223	0.067*	(0.034)	0.048
Relevance	0.113	0.198	0.085**	(0.032)	0.007
Clarity	0.051	0.146	0.095***	(0.026)	0.000
Coordination	0.400	0.495	0.095	(0.072)	0.189
Sincerity	0.440	0.441	0.001	(0.072)	0.990
Ranked ADC	0.112	0.156	0.043	(0.031)	0.160
Ranked VDC	0.113	0.151	0.038	(0.030)	0.201
<i>N</i> (VSLAs)	100	93	193		

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

C Regression Tables

C.1 Difference in Means

Table SI.3: Difference in Means Results

Comm. Grants	Level of Participation			Quality of Grant Participation				Quality of Part.		Grants Policy Receptiveness			Local Elite
	Part. (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Binary)	(Self-Rep., Index)	Relevance (Behav.)	Clarity (Behav.)	Coord. (Behav.)	Sincerity (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Index)		Proposal Funded	Ranked ADC	Ranked VDC	
Treatment	0.068* (0.033)	0.064*** (0.013)	0.208*** (0.047)	0.087** (0.032)	0.092*** (0.026)	0.079 (0.076)	-0.006 (0.073)	0.221*** (0.039)	0.000 (0.001)	0.041 (0.029)	0.041 (0.029)	0.041 (0.029)	0.204*** (0.048)
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.114	0.054	0.094	0.106	0.146	0.321	0.330	0.051	0.013	0.137	0.104	0.104	0.078
R2 Adj.	0.100	0.039	0.080	0.093	0.133	0.310	0.320	0.037	-0.002	0.124	0.090	0.090	0.065
RMSE	0.36	0.34	1.02	0.34	0.27	0.41	0.41	0.94	0.02	0.31	0.32	0.32	1.01
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

C.2 OLS Adjusted

Table SI.4: Primary Outcome 1: Level of Political Participation

	Community Grants Participation (Behavioral)	Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Binary)	Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Index)
Treatment	0.059* (0.028)	0.060*** (0.013)	0.252*** (0.034)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	-0.001 (0.023)	0.027 (0.029)	-0.061 (0.061)
Number of Children	0.011* (0.005)	0.008 (0.006)	0.036* (0.015)
Education Level	0.008 (0.022)	0.014 (0.015)	0.057 (0.046)
Thatched Home Roof	0.003 (0.020)	-0.012 (0.026)	0.160* (0.064)
Other Material Roof	0.073 (0.144)	-0.070 (0.151)	1.729* (0.859)
Fire Bricks Home	0.023 (0.025)	-0.005 (0.044)	0.033 (0.078)
Mud Home	-0.022 (0.045)	-0.043 (0.077)	0.312+ (0.186)
Other Material Home	-0.119 (0.114)	-0.028 (0.298)	0.012 (0.189)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.064+ (0.036)	0.053 (0.034)	0.455*** (0.101)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.010 (0.009)	0.027** (0.009)	0.274*** (0.029)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.004 (0.010)	0.054*** (0.011)	0.035 (0.024)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.007 (0.009)	0.001 (0.010)	0.029 (0.019)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.003 (0.008)	-0.032** (0.012)	-0.015 (0.028)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.008 (0.023)	0.020 (0.029)	0.042 (0.077)
Lobola Paid (Community)	-0.021 (0.025)	-0.011 (0.030)	-0.190* (0.083)
Matrilocality (Individual)	-0.016 (0.028)	-0.049 (0.036)	0.011 (0.062)
Matrilocality (Community)	0.058+ (0.030)	-0.086+ (0.046)	0.219** (0.076)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.007 (0.028)	0.032 (0.034)	-0.192** (0.070)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	-0.020 (0.037)	0.041 (0.049)	-0.215* (0.089)
Constant	0.152*** (0.017)	0.828*** (0.009)	-0.019 (0.025)
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.225	0.153	0.343
R2 Adj.	0.194	0.119	0.317
RMSE	0.34	0.32	0.87
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001			

Table SI.5: Primary Outcome 2: Quality of Political Participation

	Quality of Grant Participation				Quality of Part.
	Relevance (Behav.)	Clarity (Behav.)	Coord. (Behav.)	Sincerity (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Index)
Treatment	0.081** (0.028)	0.088*** (0.022)	0.059 (0.057)	-0.022 (0.064)	0.234*** (0.034)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.008 (0.022)	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.022 (0.022)	0.019 (0.028)	-0.064 (0.071)
Number of Children	0.008+ (0.004)	0.007* (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.004)	0.023 (0.016)
Education Level	0.006 (0.016)	0.007 (0.010)	0.017 (0.024)	-0.013 (0.020)	0.053 (0.048)
Thatched Home Roof	0.007 (0.018)	0.001 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.019)	0.019 (0.019)	0.047 (0.079)
Other Material Roof	0.129 (0.167)	0.150 (0.172)	-0.024 (0.024)	-0.005 (0.132)	0.778 (0.505)
Fire Bricks Home	0.027 (0.023)	-0.010 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.020)	-0.032 (0.025)	0.029 (0.093)
Mud Home	-0.006 (0.039)	-0.066*** (0.018)	-0.035 (0.066)	-0.003 (0.092)	0.375* (0.182)
Other Material Home	-0.118 (0.105)	-0.041 (0.030)	0.142 (0.140)	0.288 (0.188)	-0.260 (0.692)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.046 (0.030)	-0.005 (0.020)	0.031 (0.042)	-0.034 (0.030)	0.251** (0.097)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.009 (0.007)	0.009 (0.005)	0.000 (0.009)	0.001 (0.008)	0.167*** (0.027)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.009 (0.008)	0.000 (0.004)	-0.009 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)	0.088** (0.029)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.002 (0.007)	0.004 (0.005)	0.008 (0.008)	0.000 (0.007)	0.006 (0.028)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.004 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.090** (0.029)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.017 (0.019)	0.005 (0.012)	0.000 (0.024)	0.030 (0.033)	-0.017 (0.083)
Lobola Paid (Community)	-0.002 (0.020)	0.008 (0.021)	-0.014 (0.021)	-0.049* (0.025)	-0.091 (0.095)
Matrilocality (Individual)	-0.006 (0.028)	-0.001 (0.020)	-0.001 (0.020)	0.028 (0.029)	0.050 (0.092)
Matrilocality (Community)	0.045 (0.032)	0.025 (0.022)	-0.002 (0.023)	-0.048 (0.039)	0.024 (0.091)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.008 (0.027)	0.020 (0.016)	0.040 (0.029)	0.071* (0.030)	0.049 (0.099)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	-0.028 (0.032)	-0.023 (0.025)	-0.002 (0.037)	-0.044 (0.043)	-0.005 (0.128)
Constant	0.111*** (0.015)	0.052*** (0.009)	0.417*** (0.040)	0.449*** (0.045)	0.001 (0.024)
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.219	0.257	0.657	0.618	0.134
R2 Adj.	0.187	0.227	0.643	0.603	0.100
RMSE	0.32	0.25	0.29	0.31	0.90
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Reported coefficients are produced using the Lin (2013) estimator. All interaction effects are omitted from the table.

Table SI.6: Primary Outcome 3: Policy & Elite Receptiveness

	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Proposal Funded (Behavioral)	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Ranked ADC (Behavioral)	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Ranked VDC (Behavioral)	Local Elite Receptiveness (Self-Reported, Index)
Treatment	0.000 (0.001)	0.032 (0.023)	0.033 (0.024)	0.243*** (0.037)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.001 (0.001)	-0.011 (0.020)	0.001 (0.019)	-0.045 (0.066)
Number of Children	0.000 (0.000)	0.011** (0.004)	0.010* (0.005)	0.027+ (0.014)
Education Level	0.003 (0.003)	0.009 (0.015)	0.027 (0.019)	0.074+ (0.043)
Thatched Home Roof	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.016)	0.011 (0.017)	0.134* (0.068)
Other Material Roof	-0.001 (0.002)	0.088 (0.128)	0.095 (0.123)	0.997** (0.368)
Fire Bricks Home	-0.005 (0.005)	0.008 (0.019)	0.016 (0.020)	0.015 (0.078)
Mud Home	-0.007 (0.008)	-0.020 (0.036)	-0.011 (0.039)	0.212 (0.171)
Other Material Home	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.131 (0.103)	-0.082 (0.099)	-0.369 (0.711)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.003 (0.003)	0.048 (0.033)	0.017 (0.026)	0.332** (0.101)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.001 (0.001)	0.003 (0.008)	0.010 (0.009)	0.237*** (0.028)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.008)	0.058* (0.028)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	-0.001 (0.001)	0.004 (0.008)	0.006 (0.008)	0.052* (0.023)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	-0.001 (0.001)	0.012* (0.006)	0.009 (0.008)	0.016 (0.024)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.000 (0.000)	0.004 (0.016)	-0.011 (0.020)	-0.073 (0.077)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.000 (0.000)	0.002 (0.019)	-0.026 (0.018)	-0.236*** (0.070)
Matrilocality (Individual)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.032 (0.027)	-0.005 (0.019)	0.099 (0.079)
Matrilocality (Community)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.036 (0.026)	0.009 (0.022)	0.270** (0.088)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.001 (0.001)	0.003 (0.024)	0.019 (0.024)	-0.098 (0.075)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.032)	0.001 (0.032)	-0.162 (0.107)
Constant	0.001 (0.001)	0.110*** (0.014)	0.110*** (0.015)	-0.015 (0.028)
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.034	0.258	0.227	0.303
R2 Adj.	-0.004	0.228	0.196	0.275
RMSE	0.02	0.29	0.29	0.88
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

C.3 Mechanisms

Table SI.7: DIM Mechanisms Results

	Collective Efficacy index	Discussion Frequency index	Group Ident. index	Perceived Injustice index	Procedural Knowledge index	Policy Pref. Coord.	Self Efficacy index
Treatment	0.129*** (0.034)	0.132*** (0.039)	0.045 (0.040)	0.128*** (0.034)	0.185*** (0.039)	0.555*** (0.147)	0.274*** (0.041)
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	2857	3970
R2	0.033	0.092	0.057	0.041	0.042	0.415	0.062
R2 Adj.	0.019	0.078	0.042	0.026	0.028	0.402	0.047
RMSE	0.94	0.98	0.98	0.99	0.93	0.81	0.90
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001							

Table SI.8: OLS Adjusted Mechanisms Results

	Collective Efficacy index	Discussion Frequency index	Group Ident. index	Perceived Injustice index	Procedural Knowledge index	Policy Pref. Coord.	Self Efficacy index
Treatment	0.097*** (0.021)	0.156*** (0.029)	0.035 (0.032)	0.114*** (0.034)	0.161*** (0.030)	0.598*** (0.121)	0.247*** (0.029)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.182** (0.058)	-0.047 (0.062)	0.040 (0.064)	0.017 (0.075)	0.035 (0.062)	0.075 (0.050)	0.042 (0.059)
Number of Children	-0.003 (0.014)	0.008 (0.012)	0.007 (0.014)	-0.036* (0.015)	0.023 (0.016)	0.000 (0.008)	0.040** (0.012)
Education Level	0.035 (0.053)	0.033 (0.042)	0.078+ (0.045)	-0.048 (0.047)	0.189*** (0.054)	0.033 (0.032)	0.203*** (0.048)
Thatched Home Roof	-0.075 (0.066)	0.100 (0.078)	-0.025 (0.077)	-0.062 (0.065)	-0.204** (0.069)	0.046 (0.045)	-0.102+ (0.061)
Other Material Roof	-0.169 (0.241)	-0.470+ (0.252)	0.806*** (0.146)	-0.007 (0.634)	-0.128 (0.862)	0.087 (0.387)	0.185 (0.414)
Fire Bricks Home	0.041 (0.111)	-0.061 (0.084)	-0.102 (0.085)	-0.052 (0.091)	0.088 (0.089)	0.002 (0.038)	-0.032 (0.082)
Mud Home	0.252+ (0.130)	0.006 (0.174)	0.008 (0.148)	0.059 (0.136)	0.365* (0.158)	-0.159 (0.154)	0.250+ (0.150)
Other Material Home	0.241 (0.842)	-0.210+ (0.109)	-0.415 (0.817)	-0.388 (0.603)	-0.422 (0.520)	0.247 (0.169)	-0.958** (0.365)
Household Item Ownership Index	-0.111 (0.088)	0.443*** (0.108)	-0.064 (0.108)	-0.102 (0.086)	-0.062 (0.088)	-0.038 (0.075)	0.055 (0.087)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	-0.010 (0.023)	0.083*** (0.019)	0.045 (0.032)	0.043+ (0.026)	0.060* (0.028)	-0.035* (0.016)	0.044* (0.022)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.111*** (0.026)	0.043+ (0.024)	0.104*** (0.027)	0.024 (0.029)	0.086** (0.028)	-0.010 (0.018)	0.327*** (0.024)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.079** (0.026)	0.010 (0.025)	0.018 (0.026)	0.050+ (0.026)	0.018 (0.025)	0.004 (0.014)	0.002 (0.021)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	-0.054+ (0.028)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.095*** (0.029)	-0.019 (0.029)	-0.101*** (0.028)	0.003 (0.015)	-0.098** (0.030)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.045 (0.075)	-0.007 (0.108)	-0.057 (0.087)	0.036 (0.089)	-0.012 (0.070)	-0.012 (0.077)	0.061 (0.074)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.045 (0.075)	-0.195* (0.099)	-0.169* (0.077)	0.126 (0.092)	0.076 (0.080)	0.014 (0.068)	0.112 (0.080)
Matrilocality (Individual)	-0.103 (0.071)	0.136* (0.066)	-0.012 (0.082)	-0.266** (0.091)	-0.239*** (0.070)	-0.011 (0.047)	-0.119+ (0.061)
Matrilocality (Community)	-0.477*** (0.091)	0.159* (0.072)	-0.204* (0.080)	0.086 (0.085)	-0.173* (0.082)	-0.047 (0.054)	-0.232*** (0.062)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.167* (0.080)	-0.177* (0.090)	0.064 (0.106)	0.099 (0.100)	-0.021 (0.098)	0.077+ (0.040)	0.061 (0.109)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	0.450*** (0.120)	-0.401*** (0.117)	-0.001 (0.105)	0.136 (0.114)	0.388*** (0.117)	-0.142** (0.045)	0.252* (0.111)
Constant	0.016 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.021)	0.007 (0.020)	0.012 (0.020)	0.010 (0.020)	-0.019 (0.081)	0.014 (0.023)
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	2857	3970
R2	0.237	0.258	0.135	0.079	0.185	0.708	0.316
R2 Adj.	0.206	0.229	0.101	0.042	0.152	0.692	0.289
RMSE	0.83	0.88	0.94	0.97	0.86	0.57	0.77
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
 Reported coefficients are produced using the Lin (2013) estimator.

D Pre-Registered Heterogeneity: Kinship

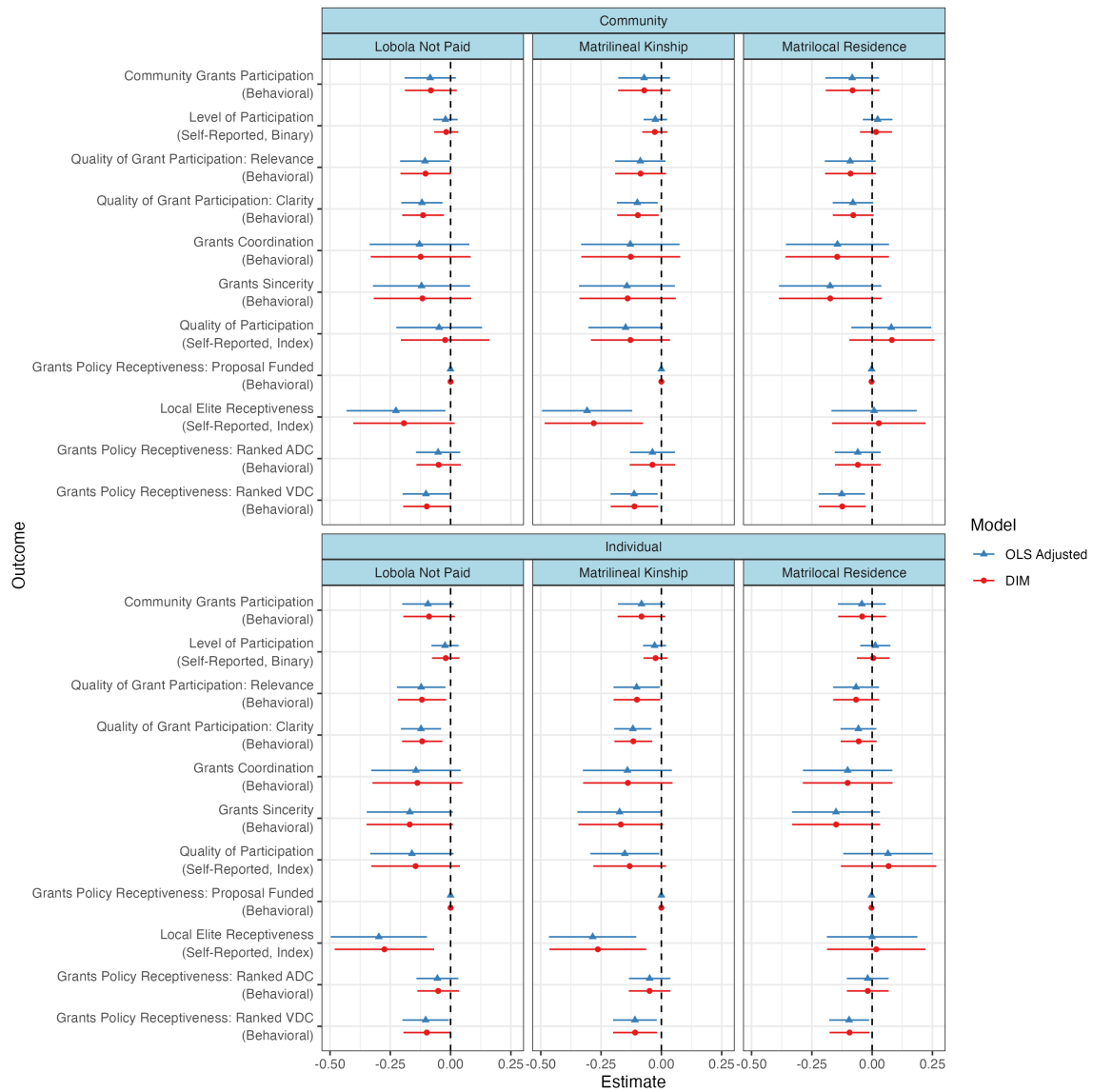


Figure SI.1: Marginal effects of treatment by various measures of matrilineality at both the community (top panel) and individual (bottom panel) levels.

Table SI.9: Primary Outcome 1: Interaction Effects with Matrilineal Kinship

	Community Grants Participation (Behavioral)		Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Binary)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.121*	0.121*	0.077***	0.077***
	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.020)	(0.021)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.026	0.003	0.051*	0.121***
	(0.030)	(0.029)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Treatment x Matrilineal Kinship	-0.082+	-0.082+	-0.028	-0.024
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Age	0.000		0.000**	
	(0.000)		(0.000)	
Married	-0.006		0.030	
	(0.017)		(0.019)	
Number of Children	0.010**		0.006	
	(0.004)		(0.004)	
Education Level	0.021		0.024*	
	(0.016)		(0.012)	
Thatched Home Roof	0.008		-0.025	
	(0.016)		(0.016)	
Other Material Roof	-0.036		-0.074	
	(0.109)		(0.121)	
Fire Bricks Home	0.014		0.041	
	(0.021)		(0.028)	
Mud Home	-0.042		0.036	
	(0.044)		(0.047)	
Other Material Home	-0.107		0.005	
	(0.093)		(0.229)	
Household Item Ownership Index	0.063*		0.006	
	(0.027)		(0.023)	
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.019*		0.023***	
	(0.008)		(0.006)	
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	-0.002		0.045***	
	(0.007)		(0.008)	
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.004		-0.001	
	(0.006)		(0.007)	
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.004		-0.044***	
	(0.007)		(0.007)	
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.127	0.117	0.127	0.068
R2 Adj.	0.110	0.104	0.110	0.054
RMSE	0.36	0.36	0.33	0.34
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table SI.10: Primary Outcome 2: Interaction Effects with Matrilineal Kinship

	Quality of Grant Participation								Quality of Part.	
	Relevance (Behav.)		Clarity (Behav.)		Coord. (Behav.)		Sincerity (Behav.)		(Self-Reported, Index)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.153** (0.050)	0.151** (0.050)	0.166*** (0.043)	0.164*** (0.043)	0.165* (0.082)	0.165* (0.083)	0.100 (0.089)	0.098 (0.089)	0.328*** (0.062)	0.305*** (0.065)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.037 (0.029)	0.025 (0.027)	0.042* (0.017)	0.031+ (0.016)	0.112* (0.053)	0.117* (0.053)	0.104* (0.052)	0.117* (0.052)	0.009 (0.055)	-0.053 (0.054)
Treatment x Matrilineal Kinship	-0.103* (0.049)	-0.101* (0.049)	-0.118** (0.039)	-0.116** (0.040)	-0.141 (0.094)	-0.139 (0.094)	-0.173+ (0.089)	-0.168+ (0.089)	-0.152* (0.072)	-0.132+ (0.076)
Age	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	
Married	0.001 (0.015)		-0.008 (0.013)		-0.004 (0.023)		0.040+ (0.022)		-0.080+ (0.046)	
Number of Children	0.007+ (0.004)		0.010*** (0.003)		0.009* (0.005)		0.002 (0.004)		0.019 (0.012)	
Education Level	0.017 (0.014)		0.020* (0.010)		0.027 (0.024)		0.000 (0.022)		0.115*** (0.032)	
Thatched Home Roof	0.010 (0.015)		0.013 (0.010)		0.008 (0.020)		0.024 (0.019)		0.082 (0.053)	
Other Material Roof	0.005 (0.113)		0.031 (0.117)		-0.059 (0.136)		-0.119 (0.130)		0.437 (0.367)	
Fire Bricks Home	0.006 (0.019)		0.000 (0.016)		0.024 (0.022)		0.003 (0.025)		0.081 (0.064)	
Mud Home	-0.016 (0.044)		-0.045 (0.036)		-0.021 (0.054)		-0.004 (0.068)		0.387** (0.122)	
Other Material Home	-0.112 (0.087)		-0.039 (0.057)		0.137 (0.249)		0.279 (0.232)		0.083 (0.778)	
Household Item Ownership Index	0.051* (0.026)		0.016 (0.021)		0.017 (0.032)		-0.016 (0.035)		0.191** (0.068)	
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.018* (0.007)		0.017** (0.006)		0.014 (0.009)		0.005 (0.008)		0.166*** (0.020)	
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.008 (0.006)		0.001 (0.005)		0.004 (0.008)		0.003 (0.008)		0.058** (0.019)	
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	-0.002 (0.006)		-0.002 (0.004)		0.001 (0.006)		-0.012+ (0.007)		0.016 (0.020)	
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.003 (0.007)		-0.002 (0.005)		-0.015+ (0.008)		-0.017* (0.008)		-0.046* (0.019)	
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.119	0.111	0.165	0.156	0.331	0.327	0.341	0.337	0.108	0.054
R2 Adj.	0.102	0.098	0.149	0.143	0.318	0.316	0.328	0.327	0.090	0.039
RMSE	0.33	0.34	0.27	0.27	0.41	0.41	0.40	0.40	0.91	0.94
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table SI.11: Primary Outcome 3: Interaction Effects with Matrilineal Kinship

	Proposal Funded (Behavioral)		Ranked ADC (Behavioral)		Ranked VDC (Behavioral)		Local Elite Receptiveness (Self-Reported, Index)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.073+ (0.044)	0.072 (0.044)	0.111* (0.048)	0.110* (0.048)	0.419*** (0.077)	0.382*** (0.080)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.019 (0.027)	0.002 (0.026)	0.045+ (0.027)	0.027 (0.026)	-0.254*** (0.068)	-0.548*** (0.071)
Treatment x Matrilineal Kinship	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.049 (0.043)	-0.049 (0.044)	-0.110* (0.046)	-0.109* (0.046)	-0.285** (0.092)	-0.263** (0.102)
Age	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	
Married	0.000 (0.000)		-0.003 (0.014)		0.008 (0.013)		-0.133** (0.046)	
Number of Children	0.000 (0.000)		0.010** (0.003)		0.008* (0.004)		0.017 (0.012)	
Education Level	0.001 (0.001)		0.024+ (0.013)		0.025+ (0.013)		0.135*** (0.033)	
Thatched Home Roof	0.001 (0.001)		0.011 (0.014)		-0.003 (0.014)		0.232*** (0.055)	
Other Material Roof	-0.001 (0.001)		-0.021 (0.104)		-0.002 (0.099)		0.712** (0.270)	
Fire Bricks Home	-0.002 (0.002)		0.005 (0.019)		0.003 (0.020)		0.050 (0.060)	
Mud Home	-0.003 (0.003)		-0.053 (0.037)		-0.047 (0.038)		0.192 (0.128)	
Other Material Home	-0.002 (0.002)		-0.124 (0.085)		-0.050 (0.062)		0.398 (1.075)	
Household Item Ownership Index	0.002 (0.002)		0.035 (0.024)		0.024 (0.024)		0.407*** (0.073)	
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.000 (0.000)		0.012+ (0.007)		0.018* (0.007)		0.257*** (0.023)	
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)		-0.002 (0.006)		-0.008 (0.007)		0.023 (0.021)	
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.005)		0.002 (0.006)		0.071*** (0.017)	
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.000 (0.000)		0.006 (0.006)		0.003 (0.007)		0.068*** (0.019)	
Num.Obs.	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970	3970
R2	0.016	0.013	0.146	0.139	0.119	0.111	0.257	0.143
R2 Adj.	-0.003	-0.002	0.129	0.125	0.102	0.097	0.243	0.130
RMSE	0.02	0.02	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.91	0.98
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

D.1 Heterogeneity by District

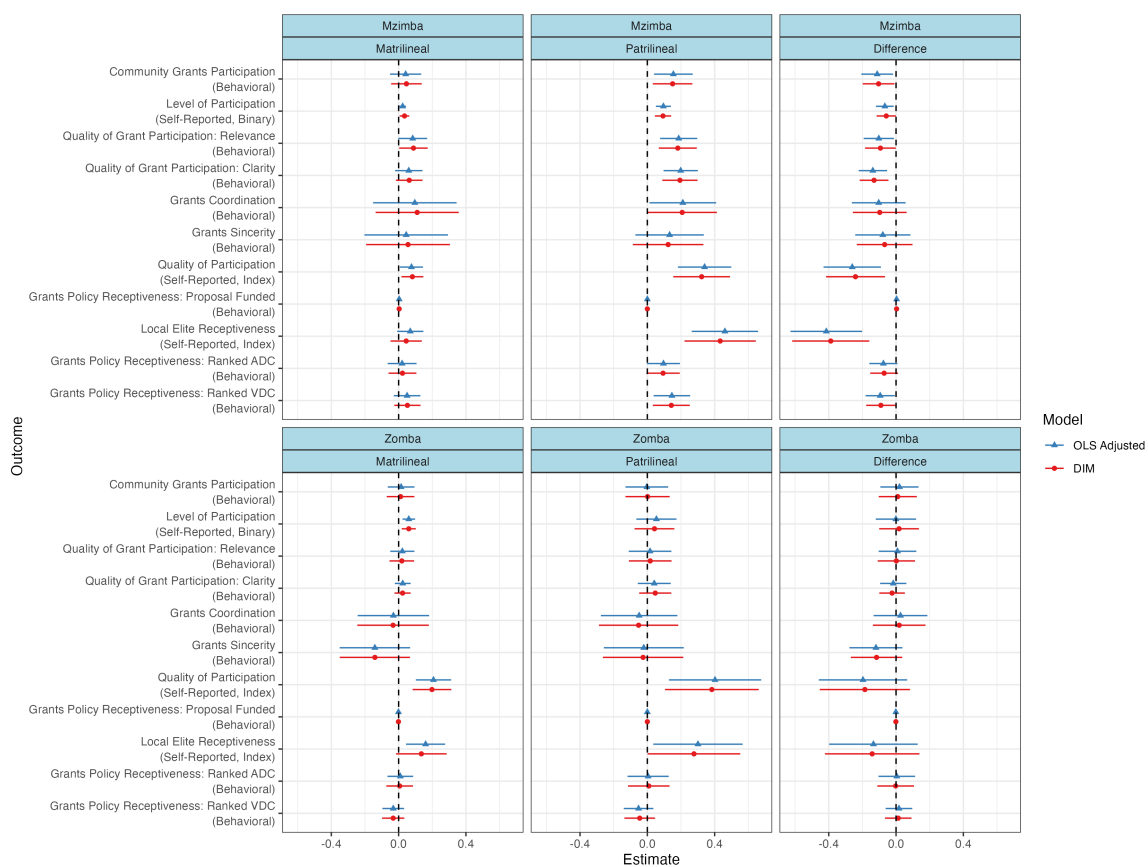
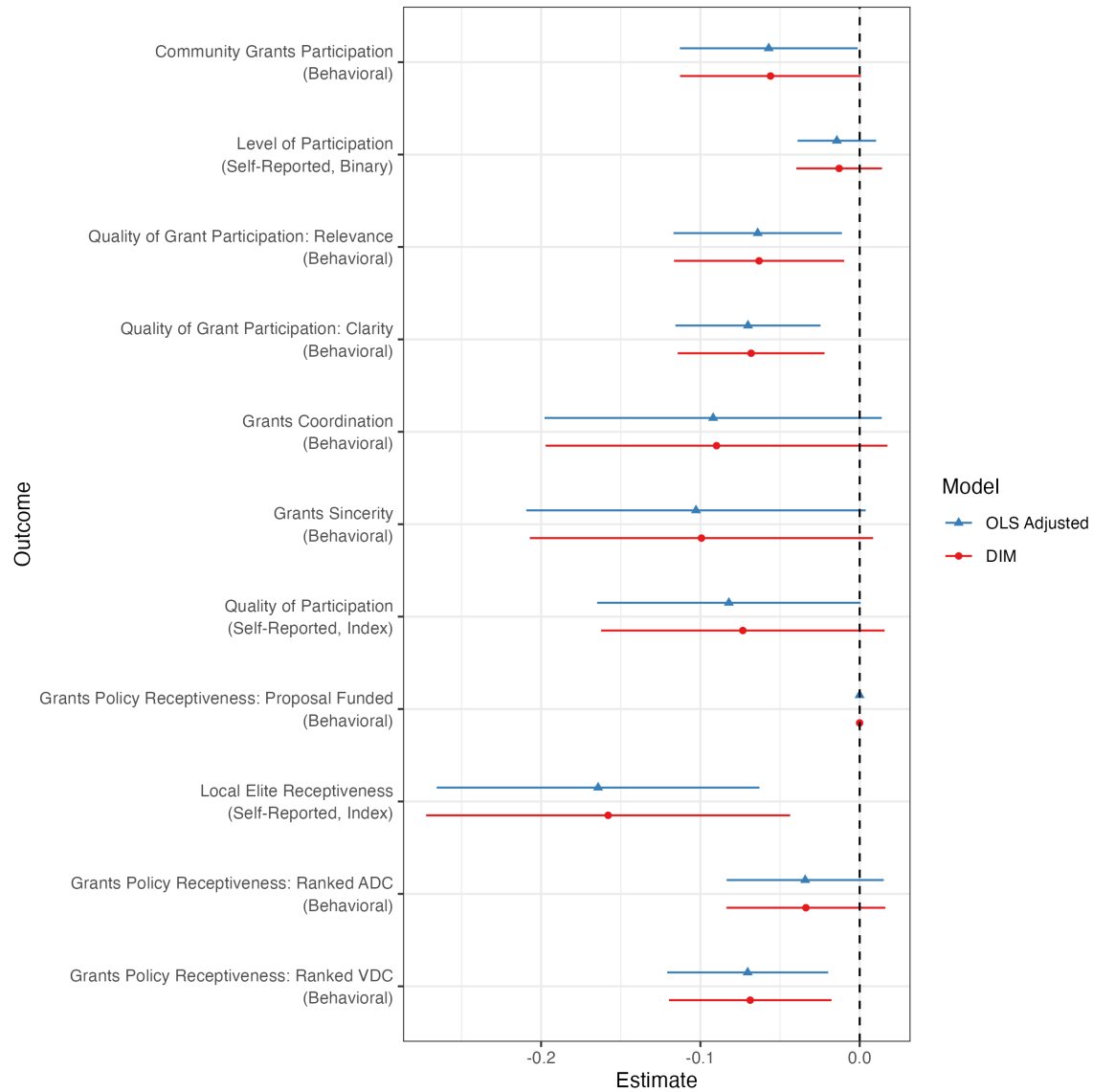


Figure SI.2: Interaction of treatment with matrilineality by districts.

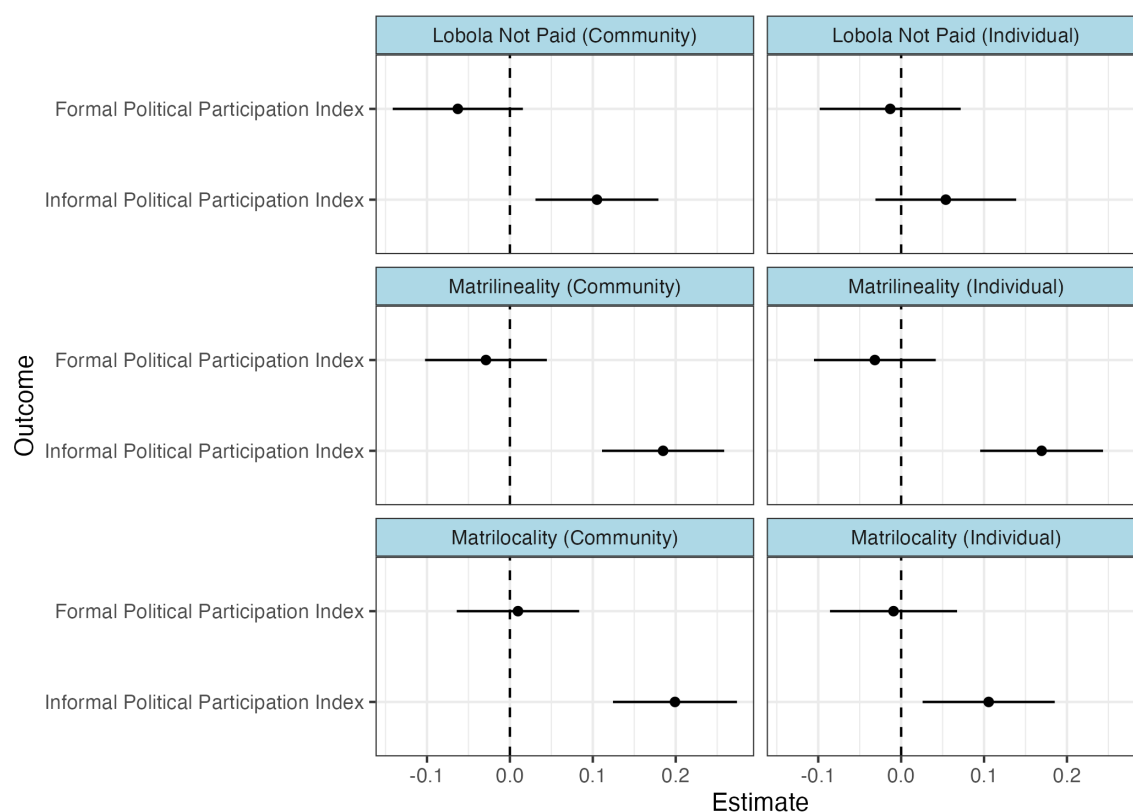
D.2 Continuous Measure of Kinship



Note: The continuous measure of kinship was constructed using factor analysis. All six binary measures of kinship were used to calculate factor scores and loaded onto two factors; four measures of kinship (whether lobola was paid and matrilineality, at the individual and community level) loaded well onto the first factor, whose scores were used as the continuous measure of kinship.

Figure SI.3: Interaction of treatment with continuous measure of kinship.

D.3 Difference in Baseline Political Participation by Measures of Kinship



Note: The formal political participation index includes whether women reported attending or speaking at a community meeting (such as a VDC meeting) in their area. The informal political participation index includes whether women reported contacting local government councilors, members of parliament, officials of government agencies, traditional authorities, political party officials, religious leaders, civil society leaders, VDC chairperson or members, group village head, or village head, or whether they reported having the contact details for the VDC chairperson.

Figure SI.4: Difference in means estimates for baseline formal and informal political participation by 6 measures of kinship.

D.4 Differences in Mechanism Measures by Kinship

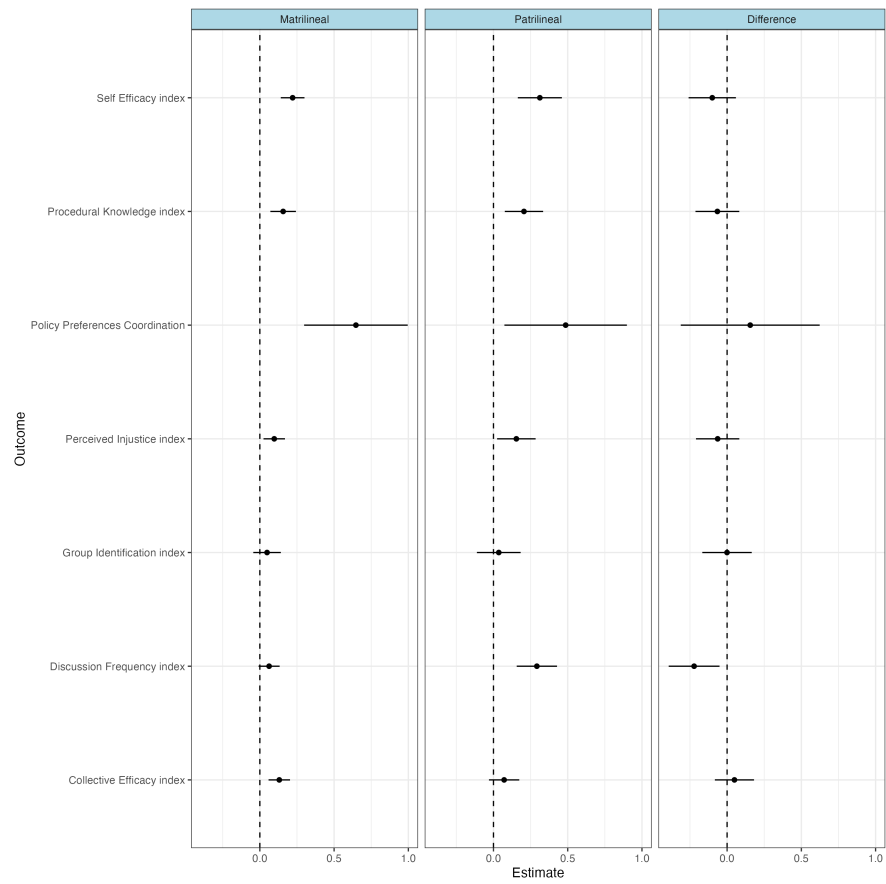


Figure SI.5: Mechanism measures across matrilineal v. patrilineal areas.

E Robustness Checks

These robustness checks are run on the experimental sample that only includes women who were ‘invited’ to attend the trainings. This experimental sample has 3,549 women. The results do not change substantively between the full experimental sample and the experimental sample that excludes non-invited women.

E.1 Difference in Means

Table SI.12: Difference in Means Results

Comm. Grants	Level of Participation			Quality of Grant Participation				Quality of Part.		Grants Policy Receptiveness			Local Elite
	Part. (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Binary)	(Self-Rep., Index)	Relevance (Behav.)	Clarity (Behav.)	Coord. (Behav.)	Sincerity (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Index)		Proposal Funded	Ranked ADC	Ranked VDC	Recept. (Index)
Treatment	0.069* (0.033)	0.061*** (0.014)	0.216*** (0.048)	0.087** (0.032)	0.093*** (0.026)	0.063 (0.076)	0.023 (0.072)	0.179*** (0.040)		0.000 (0.001)	0.044 (0.029)	0.040 (0.030)	0.226*** (0.048)
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549		3549	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.119	0.059	0.092	0.110	0.147	0.312	0.331	0.042		0.014	0.143	0.108	0.075
R2 Adj.	0.104	0.043	0.076	0.095	0.132	0.301	0.320	0.025		-0.002	0.128	0.093	0.060
RMSE	0.36	0.33	1.02	0.34	0.27	0.41	0.41	0.96		0.02	0.31	0.32	1.00
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA		VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001													

E.2 OLS Adjusted

Table SI.13: Primary Outcome 1: Level of Political Participation

	Community Grants Participation (Behavioral)	Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Binary)	Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Index)
Treatment	0.060* (0.029)	0.058*** (0.013)	0.260*** (0.035)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.001 (0.024)	0.021 (0.030)	-0.064 (0.063)
Number of Children	0.010* (0.005)	0.006 (0.006)	0.028+ (0.017)
Education Level	0.009 (0.021)	0.017 (0.016)	0.039 (0.051)
Thatched Home Roof	-0.008 (0.023)	-0.043 (0.028)	0.106 (0.070)
Other Material Roof	0.067 (0.141)	-0.099 (0.156)	1.689+ (0.882)
Fire Bricks Home	0.018 (0.030)	-0.012 (0.047)	-0.069 (0.087)
Mud Home	-0.011 (0.053)	0.003 (0.088)	0.276 (0.222)
Other Material Home	-0.022 (0.053)	-0.118 (0.459)	0.012 (0.231)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.063+ (0.036)	0.034 (0.033)	0.477*** (0.109)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.012 (0.011)	0.023* (0.009)	0.271*** (0.030)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.003 (0.010)	0.053*** (0.012)	0.033 (0.028)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.014 (0.010)	0.000 (0.010)	0.030 (0.019)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.003 (0.009)	-0.039** (0.013)	-0.032 (0.030)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.007 (0.023)	0.005 (0.033)	0.017 (0.080)
Lobola Paid (Community)	-0.018 (0.026)	-0.021 (0.031)	-0.145 (0.098)
Matrilocality (Individual)	-0.010 (0.031)	-0.027 (0.037)	0.023 (0.065)
Matrilocality (Community)	0.059+ (0.032)	-0.079+ (0.048)	0.226** (0.081)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	-0.009 (0.030)	0.053 (0.039)	-0.222** (0.079)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	-0.017 (0.040)	0.013 (0.050)	-0.253* (0.100)
Constant	0.154*** (0.018)	0.839*** (0.009)	-0.018 (0.025)
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.234	0.169	0.363
R2 Adj.	0.199	0.131	0.334
RMSE	0.34	0.31	0.85
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001			

Table SI.14: Primary Outcome 2: Quality of Political Participation

	Quality of Grant Participation				Quality of Part.
	Relevance (Behav.)	Clarity (Behav.)	Coord. (Behav.)	Sincerity (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Index)
Treatment	0.080** (0.029)	0.089*** (0.022)	0.042 (0.056)	0.006 (0.065)	0.195*** (0.036)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.008 (0.024)	-0.012 (0.019)	-0.014 (0.020)	0.012 (0.030)	-0.158* (0.071)
Number of Children	0.005 (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.003 (0.004)	0.001 (0.005)	0.012 (0.020)
Education Level	0.005 (0.016)	0.010 (0.010)	0.022 (0.023)	-0.010 (0.028)	0.082 (0.057)
Thatched Home Roof	0.001 (0.022)	0.000 (0.014)	-0.006 (0.022)	0.035+ (0.020)	0.065 (0.079)
Other Material Roof	0.118 (0.156)	0.146 (0.168)	-0.037 (0.026)	-0.009 (0.134)	0.780 (0.545)
Fire Bricks Home	0.019 (0.026)	-0.008 (0.020)	-0.008 (0.020)	-0.031 (0.027)	-0.040 (0.111)
Mud Home	0.003 (0.045)	-0.054** (0.020)	-0.012 (0.062)	0.006 (0.086)	0.279 (0.226)
Other Material Home	-0.047 (0.044)	-0.039 (0.044)	0.237 (0.218)	0.416 (0.254)	-0.013 (0.698)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.037 (0.033)	-0.004 (0.024)	0.030 (0.042)	-0.049 (0.033)	0.237* (0.098)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.012 (0.008)	0.010+ (0.006)	0.002 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.010)	0.156*** (0.028)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.009 (0.008)	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.008 (0.008)	0.001 (0.009)	0.103** (0.032)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.008 (0.008)	0.007 (0.006)	0.007 (0.009)	-0.004 (0.009)	0.021 (0.029)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.003 (0.009)	0.000 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.009)	-0.100** (0.031)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.013 (0.020)	0.004 (0.013)	-0.017 (0.024)	0.008 (0.034)	0.000 (0.103)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.004 (0.024)	0.011 (0.023)	0.004 (0.021)	-0.054* (0.026)	-0.047 (0.101)
Matrilocality (Individual)	-0.009 (0.031)	-0.014 (0.025)	0.011 (0.018)	0.010 (0.028)	0.027 (0.095)
Matrilocality (Community)	0.054+ (0.031)	0.034 (0.023)	-0.019 (0.025)	-0.053 (0.039)	0.088 (0.090)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	-0.004 (0.031)	0.017 (0.017)	0.055 (0.035)	0.096** (0.036)	0.079 (0.113)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	-0.028 (0.036)	-0.016 (0.026)	-0.031 (0.043)	-0.059 (0.050)	-0.072 (0.132)
Constant	0.114*** (0.016)	0.053*** (0.009)	0.416*** (0.040)	0.427*** (0.047)	0.002 (0.025)
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.227	0.265	0.666	0.590	0.127
R2 Adj.	0.192	0.232	0.651	0.572	0.087
RMSE	0.32	0.25	0.29	0.32	0.92
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Reported coefficients are produced using the Lin (2013) estimator. All interaction effects are omitted from the table.

Table SI.15: Primary Outcome 3: Policy & Elite Receptiveness

	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Proposal Funded (Behavioral)	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Ranked ADC (Behavioral)	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Ranked VDC (Behavioral)	Local Elite Receptiveness (Self-Reported, Index)
Treatment	0.000 (0.001)	0.035 (0.024)	0.032 (0.025)	0.253*** (0.040)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000+ (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.001 (0.001)	-0.011 (0.021)	0.008 (0.019)	-0.028 (0.072)
Number of Children	0.000 (0.000)	0.012** (0.004)	0.010+ (0.005)	0.018 (0.017)
Education Level	0.003 (0.003)	0.005 (0.015)	0.021 (0.018)	0.065 (0.052)
Thatched Home Roof	0.002 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.019)	0.004 (0.020)	0.025 (0.076)
Other Material Roof	-0.001 (0.002)	0.087 (0.127)	0.094 (0.122)	0.920* (0.414)
Fire Bricks Home	-0.006 (0.006)	0.006 (0.024)	0.012 (0.025)	-0.065 (0.092)
Mud Home	-0.009 (0.010)	0.010 (0.043)	-0.011 (0.048)	0.220 (0.230)
Other Material Home	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.037 (0.046)	0.004 (0.065)	0.062 (0.776)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.003 (0.004)	0.048 (0.033)	0.012 (0.028)	0.278* (0.114)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.008)	0.013 (0.009)	0.241*** (0.031)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.009)	0.080* (0.033)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	-0.001 (0.001)	0.006 (0.009)	0.007 (0.008)	0.048* (0.024)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	-0.001 (0.001)	0.012+ (0.007)	0.010 (0.008)	-0.035 (0.029)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.000 (0.000)	0.006 (0.016)	-0.008 (0.020)	-0.088 (0.085)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.003 (0.019)	-0.036* (0.017)	-0.163+ (0.083)
Matrilocality (Individual)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.028 (0.029)	0.005 (0.022)	0.050 (0.082)
Matrilocality (Community)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.038 (0.028)	0.007 (0.022)	0.073 (0.104)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.010 (0.027)	0.003 (0.025)	-0.003 (0.087)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	0.001 (0.001)	0.009 (0.033)	0.008 (0.033)	-0.065 (0.108)
Constant	0.001 (0.001)	0.110*** (0.014)	0.113*** (0.016)	-0.006 (0.030)
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.038	0.269	0.232	0.234
R2 Adj.	-0.006	0.236	0.198	0.199
RMSE	0.02	0.29	0.29	0.91
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

E.3 Mechanisms

Table SI.16: Mechanisms Results

	Collective Efficacy index	Discussion Frequency index	Group Identification index	Perceived Injustice index	Procedural Knowledge index	Policy Preferences Coordination	Self Efficacy index
Treatment	0.121*** (0.036)	0.146*** (0.041)	0.041 (0.040)	0.132*** (0.034)	0.173*** (0.040)	0.593*** (0.149)	0.272*** (0.043)
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	2437	3549
R ²	0.036	0.089	0.060	0.041	0.040	0.414	0.066
R ² Adj.	0.019	0.074	0.044	0.025	0.023	0.399	0.051
RMSE	0.93	0.99	0.98	0.98	0.93	0.83	0.89
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	Yes

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

E.4 Kinship

Table SI.17: Primary Outcome 1: Interaction Effects with Matrilineal Kinship

	Community Grants Participation (Behavioral)		Self-Reported Political Participation (Index)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.121* (0.053)	0.119* (0.053)	0.071** (0.023)	0.072** (0.024)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.006 (0.033)	-0.016 (0.032)	0.047+ (0.024)	0.124*** (0.023)
Treatment x Matrilineal Kinship	-0.078 (0.051)	-0.077 (0.051)	-0.022 (0.026)	-0.020 (0.028)
Age	0.000 (0.000)		0.000** (0.000)	
Married	-0.007 (0.019)		0.026 (0.019)	
Number of Children	0.009* (0.004)		0.007 (0.005)	
Education Level	0.017 (0.017)		0.028* (0.013)	
Thatched Home Roof	-0.004 (0.018)		-0.037* (0.017)	
Other Material Roof	-0.052 (0.126)		0.006 (0.094)	
Fire Bricks Home	0.022 (0.024)		0.038 (0.030)	
Mud Home	-0.039 (0.048)		0.070 (0.052)	
Other Material Home	-0.063 (0.104)		-0.055 (0.307)	
Household Item Ownership Index	0.072** (0.028)		-0.002 (0.023)	
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.018* (0.008)		0.021*** (0.006)	
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.001 (0.008)		0.045*** (0.008)	
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.007 (0.007)		-0.001 (0.007)	
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.007 (0.008)		-0.046*** (0.008)	
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.134	0.124	0.140	0.076
R2 Adj.	0.115	0.109	0.122	0.060
RMSE	0.36	0.36	0.32	0.33
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001				

Table SI.18: Primary Outcome 2: Interaction Effects with Matrilineal Kinship

	Quality of Grant Participation								Quality of Part.	
	Relevance (Behav.)		Clarity (Behav.)		Coord. (Behav.)		Sincerity (Behav.)		(Self-Reported, Index)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.152** (0.052)	0.149** (0.052)	0.174*** (0.045)	0.172*** (0.045)	0.136 (0.085)	0.135 (0.085)	0.137 (0.084)	0.134 (0.084)	0.298*** (0.070)	0.279*** (0.076)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.021 (0.031)	0.010 (0.029)	0.039* (0.018)	0.027 (0.018)	0.095+ (0.056)	0.097+ (0.055)	0.104* (0.051)	0.128* (0.052)	0.028 (0.060)	-0.044 (0.059)
Treatment x Matrilineal Kinship	-0.098* (0.050)	-0.097+ (0.050)	-0.124** (0.041)	-0.122** (0.041)	-0.115 (0.094)	-0.113 (0.094)	-0.192* (0.087)	-0.188* (0.088)	-0.169* (0.081)	-0.153+ (0.087)
Age	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	
Married	-0.004 (0.018)		-0.010 (0.015)		-0.002 (0.024)		0.034 (0.023)		-0.131** (0.049)	
Number of Children	0.005 (0.004)		0.009** (0.003)		0.009+ (0.005)		0.003 (0.005)		0.010 (0.014)	
Education Level	0.012 (0.015)		0.018 (0.011)		0.026 (0.025)		-0.002 (0.023)		0.122** (0.039)	
Thatched Home Roof	0.004 (0.016)		0.009 (0.013)		0.012 (0.022)		0.021 (0.021)		0.070 (0.055)	
Other Material Roof	-0.004 (0.127)		0.029 (0.131)		-0.056 (0.156)		0.003 (0.150)		0.591 (0.363)	
Fire Bricks Home	0.012 (0.022)		0.002 (0.019)		0.033 (0.024)		-0.026 (0.028)		0.066 (0.077)	
Mud Home	-0.014 (0.047)		-0.049 (0.036)		-0.024 (0.056)		0.001 (0.067)		0.367* (0.153)	
Other Material Home	-0.071 (0.093)		-0.043 (0.074)		0.076 (0.323)		0.160 (0.270)		0.567 (0.882)	
Household Item Ownership Index	0.056* (0.026)		0.026 (0.022)		0.019 (0.034)		-0.019 (0.035)		0.201** (0.073)	
Baseline Political Part. Level Index	0.017* (0.008)		0.016* (0.006)		0.010 (0.009)		-0.003 (0.009)		0.168*** (0.021)	
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.013+ (0.007)		0.004 (0.005)		0.005 (0.008)		0.018* (0.008)		0.069** (0.022)	
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.000 (0.006)		-0.004 (0.005)		0.000 (0.007)		-0.018* (0.007)		0.027 (0.020)	
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.005 (0.007)		0.001 (0.006)		-0.009 (0.008)		-0.010 (0.008)		-0.043* (0.021)	
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.123	0.116	0.166	0.158	0.320	0.316	0.349	0.344	0.103	0.045
R2 Adj.	0.105	0.100	0.148	0.143	0.305	0.305	0.335	0.333	0.083	0.028
RMSE	0.34	0.34	0.27	0.27	0.41	0.41	0.40	0.40	0.93	0.96
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table SI.19: Primary Outcome 3: Interaction Effects with Matrilineal Kinship

	Proposal Funded (Behavioral)		Ranked ADC (Behavioral)		Ranked VDC (Behavioral)		Local Elite Receptiveness (Index)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Treatment	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.074 (0.047)	0.073 (0.047)	0.107* (0.050)	0.105* (0.050)	0.440*** (0.080)	0.404*** (0.087)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.007 (0.030)	-0.010 (0.029)	0.027 (0.029)	0.009 (0.029)	-0.106 (0.071)	-0.290*** (0.073)
Treatment x Matrilineal Kinship	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.044 (0.045)	-0.044 (0.045)	-0.103* (0.047)	-0.101* (0.047)	-0.294** (0.095)	-0.264* (0.104)
Age	0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)		0.000 (0.000)	
Married	0.001 (0.000)		-0.005 (0.016)		0.008 (0.015)		-0.038 (0.050)	
Number of Children	0.000 (0.000)		0.010** (0.003)		0.007+ (0.004)		0.016 (0.013)	
Education Level	0.001 (0.001)		0.018 (0.014)		0.019 (0.013)		0.126*** (0.038)	
Thatched Home Roof	0.001 (0.001)		0.003 (0.015)		-0.008 (0.016)		0.113+ (0.060)	
Other Material Roof	0.000 (0.001)		-0.032 (0.120)		-0.008 (0.114)		0.750** (0.285)	
Fire Bricks Home	-0.003 (0.003)		0.004 (0.022)		0.011 (0.023)		0.041 (0.070)	
Mud Home	-0.004 (0.004)		-0.047 (0.042)		-0.042 (0.043)		0.266+ (0.157)	
Other Material Home	-0.002 (0.003)		-0.099 (0.100)		0.007 (0.038)		0.979 (1.258)	
Household Item Ownership Index	0.002 (0.002)		0.041+ (0.024)		0.027 (0.025)		0.321*** (0.078)	
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.000 (0.001)		0.010 (0.007)		0.017* (0.007)		0.246*** (0.024)	
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)		0.001 (0.007)		-0.004 (0.007)		0.067** (0.024)	
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)		-0.001 (0.006)		0.002 (0.006)		0.059** (0.019)	
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.000 (0.000)		0.010 (0.006)		0.006 (0.007)		0.013 (0.021)	
Num.Obs.	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549	3549
R2	0.018	0.015	0.152	0.145	0.122	0.115	0.198	0.103
R2 Adj.	-0.003	-0.003	0.133	0.130	0.103	0.099	0.181	0.087
RMSE	0.02	0.02	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.32	0.93	0.98
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
Controls	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

F Analysis on Invited Women

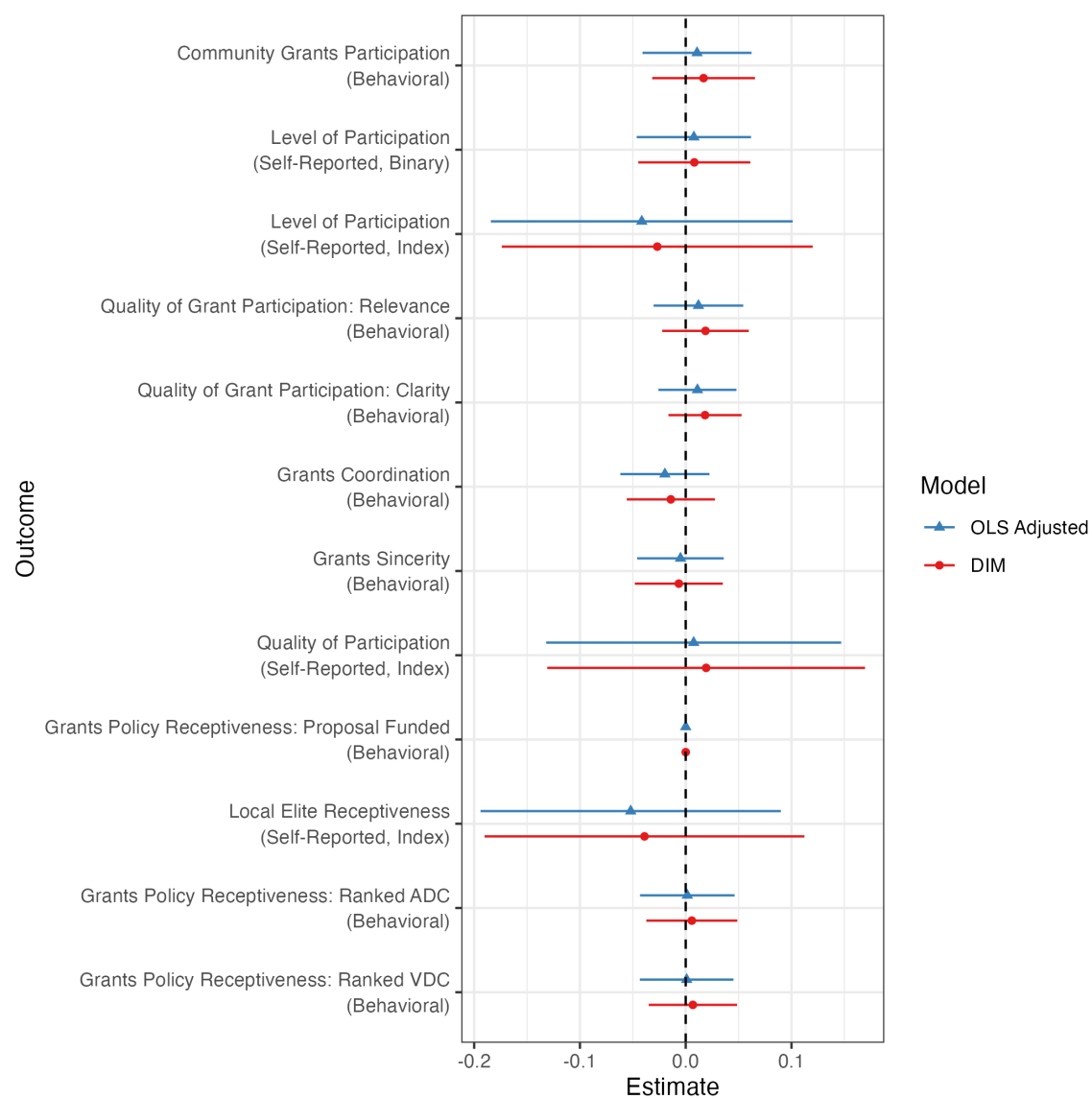


Figure SI.6: Effects of being invited on headline outcomes.

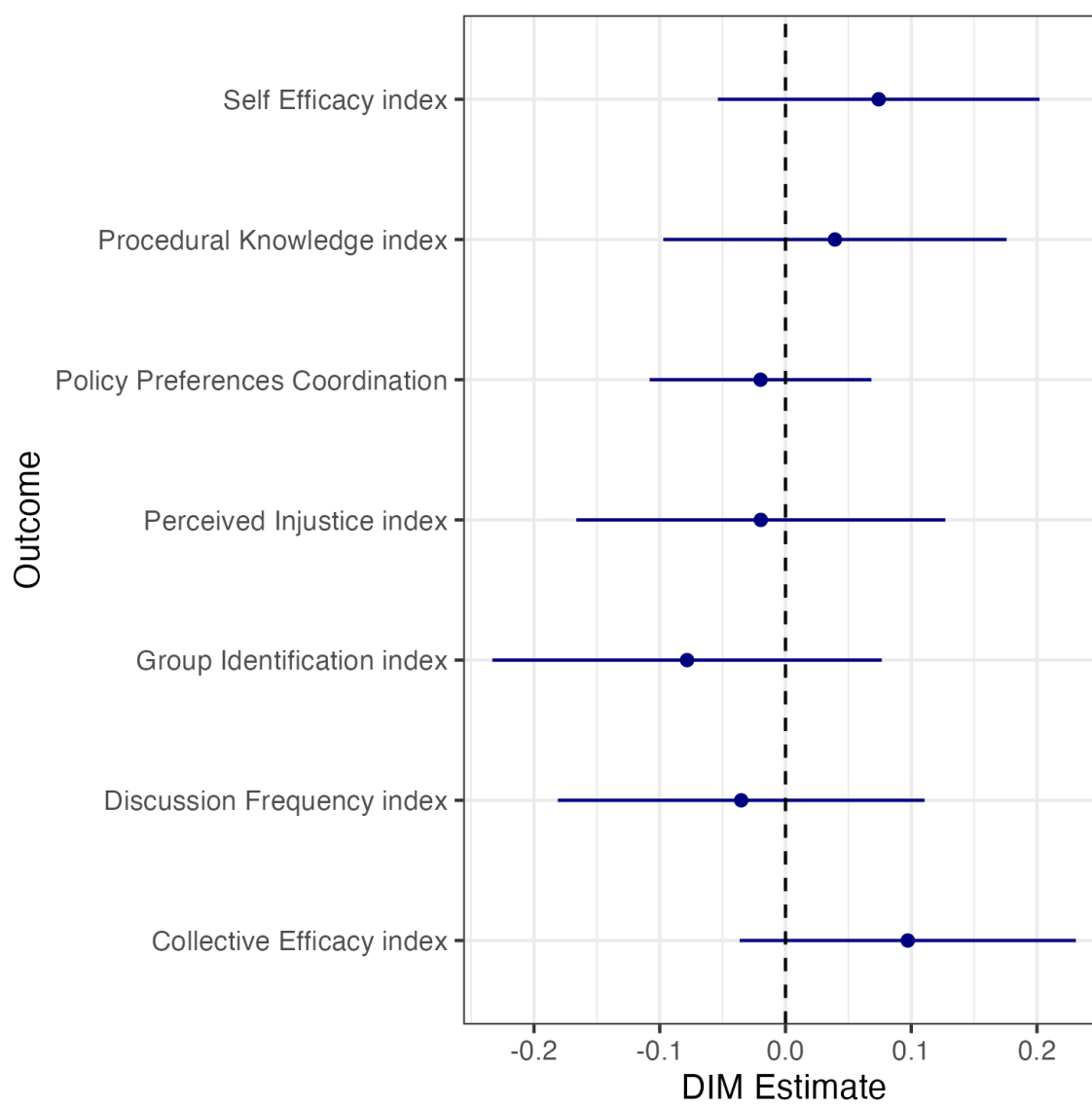


Figure SI.7: Effects of being invited on mechanisms.

F.1 Difference in Means

Table SI.20: Difference in Means Results

	Comm. Grants	Level of Participation			Quality of Grant Participation				Quality of Part.		Grants Policy Receptiveness			Local Elite
		Part. (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Binary)	(Self-Rep., Index)	Relevance (Behav.)	Clarity (Behav.)	Coord. (Behav.)	Sincerity (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Index)		Proposal Funded	Ranked ADC	Ranked VDC	
Invited	0.017 (0.025)		0.008 (0.027)	-0.027 (0.074)	0.019 (0.021)	0.018 (0.018)	-0.014 (0.021)	-0.007 (0.021)	0.019 (0.076)	0.000 (0.000)	0.006 (0.022)	0.007 (0.021)		-0.039 (0.077)
Num.Obs.	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827	827
R2	0.141	0.126	0.176	0.176	0.114	0.139	0.342	0.336	0.109		0.172	0.148	0.148	0.148
R2 Adj.	0.075	0.058	0.113	0.113	0.046	0.073	0.292	0.285	0.041		0.108	0.082	0.082	0.082
RMSE	0.35	0.39	1.00	1.00	0.32	0.26	0.40	0.40	1.09	0.00	0.30	0.30	0.30	1.04
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

F.2 OLS Adjusted

Table SI.21: Primary Outcome 1: Level of Political Participation

	Community Grants Participation (Behavioral)	Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Binary)	Level of Political Participation (Self-Reported, Index)
Invited	0.011 (0.026)	0.008 (0.027)	-0.042 (0.072)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001+ (0.000)
Married	-0.009 (0.041)	0.004 (0.059)	0.000 (0.134)
Number of Children	0.022+ (0.011)	0.001 (0.012)	0.032 (0.032)
Education Level	0.036 (0.034)	0.025 (0.036)	0.044 (0.092)
Thatched Home Roof	0.054 (0.047)	0.105+ (0.055)	0.288* (0.139)
Other Material Roof	-0.002 (0.080)	-0.626* (0.243)	0.143 (0.211)
Fire Bricks Home	-0.021 (0.078)	0.105 (0.078)	0.445* (0.181)
Mud Home	-0.068 (0.127)	-0.110 (0.114)	0.254 (0.247)
Other Material Home	-0.237 (0.303)	0.288 (0.237)	-0.250 (1.140)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.019 (0.072)	0.135+ (0.080)	0.186 (0.200)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.011 (0.023)	0.045* (0.020)	0.254*** (0.064)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	-0.015 (0.018)	0.007 (0.022)	0.069 (0.049)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	-0.013 (0.018)	-0.008 (0.022)	-0.024 (0.050)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	-0.008 (0.025)	0.000 (0.026)	0.016 (0.073)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.042 (0.059)	0.062 (0.071)	-0.017 (0.146)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.021 (0.056)	-0.063 (0.074)	-0.164 (0.174)
Matrilocality (Individual)	-0.012 (0.063)	-0.002 (0.067)	0.142 (0.136)
Matrilocality (Community)	-0.036 (0.098)	0.087 (0.093)	0.090 (0.177)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.097 (0.063)	-0.049 (0.070)	0.113 (0.198)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	0.005 (0.074)	-0.048 (0.100)	0.039 (0.234)
Constant	0.169*** (0.024)	0.780*** (0.020)	0.301*** (0.054)
Num.Obs.	827	827	827
R2	0.227	0.239	0.336
R2 Adj.	0.048	0.063	0.182
RMSE	0.34	0.36	0.90
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001			

Table SI.22: Primary Outcome 2: Quality of Political Participation

	Quality of Grant Participation				Quality of Part.
	Relevance (Behav.)	Clarity (Behav.)	Coord. (Behav.)	Sincerity (Behav.)	(Self-Rep., Index)
Invited	0.012 (0.021)	0.011 (0.019)	-0.020 (0.021)	-0.005 (0.021)	0.008 (0.070)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.000)
Married	0.027 (0.035)	0.009 (0.026)	-0.021 (0.055)	0.042 (0.054)	-0.045 (0.151)
Number of Children	0.024* (0.011)	0.017+ (0.009)	0.015 (0.012)	0.011 (0.013)	0.032 (0.032)
Education Level	0.047 (0.029)	0.030 (0.019)	0.055 (0.045)	0.039 (0.041)	0.159 (0.101)
Thatched Home Roof	0.026 (0.045)	0.029 (0.026)	-0.036 (0.052)	-0.037 (0.052)	0.278+ (0.149)
Other Material Roof	-0.017 (0.064)	0.056 (0.049)	-0.132 (0.171)	-0.115 (0.116)	-1.471 (0.924)
Fire Bricks Home	-0.007 (0.072)	-0.007 (0.050)	-0.036 (0.073)	-0.022 (0.077)	0.207 (0.185)
Mud Home	-0.012 (0.126)	-0.027 (0.104)	-0.098 (0.125)	-0.056 (0.149)	0.328 (0.317)
Other Material Home	-0.171 (0.285)	0.084 (0.072)	0.591 (0.478)	0.704 (0.470)	-0.961 (0.755)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.024 (0.065)	-0.031 (0.055)	-0.054 (0.087)	-0.030 (0.090)	0.210 (0.207)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.013 (0.018)	0.021 (0.018)	0.031+ (0.018)	0.018 (0.019)	0.158** (0.055)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	-0.023 (0.015)	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.008 (0.026)	-0.042+ (0.024)	0.050 (0.057)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	-0.007 (0.016)	0.013 (0.013)	0.011 (0.020)	-0.001 (0.020)	-0.060 (0.054)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	-0.006 (0.022)	-0.020 (0.017)	-0.036 (0.024)	-0.029 (0.024)	-0.022 (0.065)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.067 (0.052)	0.022 (0.050)	0.108 (0.072)	0.088 (0.069)	-0.015 (0.172)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.005 (0.046)	0.053 (0.044)	-0.024 (0.083)	-0.028 (0.071)	-0.189 (0.176)
Matrilocality (Individual)	0.025 (0.054)	0.088* (0.042)	0.015 (0.063)	0.093 (0.064)	0.234 (0.175)
Matrilocality (Community)	-0.012 (0.089)	-0.038 (0.055)	-0.084 (0.102)	-0.053 (0.106)	-0.248 (0.235)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.054 (0.057)	0.049 (0.047)	-0.063 (0.079)	-0.058 (0.087)	0.005 (0.190)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	0.021 (0.065)	-0.050 (0.053)	0.311** (0.107)	0.158 (0.114)	-0.094 (0.291)
Constant	0.125*** (0.021)	0.078*** (0.015)	0.471*** (0.036)	0.444*** (0.037)	0.070 (0.054)
Num.Obs.	827	827	827	827	827
R2	0.210	0.226	0.402	0.388	0.247
R2 Adj.	0.028	0.047	0.264	0.247	0.073
RMSE	0.30	0.25	0.39	0.39	1.00
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Reported coefficients are produced using the Lin (2013) estimator. All interaction effects are omitted from the table.

Table SI.23: Primary Outcome 3: Policy & Elite Receptiveness

	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Proposal Funded (Behavioral)	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Ranked ADC (Behavioral)	Grants Policy Receptiveness: Ranked VDC (Behavioral)	Local Elite Receptiveness (Self-Reported, Index)
Invited	0.000 (0.000)	0.002 (0.023)	0.001 (0.022)	-0.052 (0.072)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Married	0.000 (0.000)	0.006 (0.031)	-0.005 (0.035)	-0.140 (0.147)
Number of Children	0.000 (0.000)	0.007 (0.009)	0.011 (0.010)	0.022 (0.030)
Education Level	0.000 (0.000)	0.050+ (0.027)	0.052+ (0.027)	0.231* (0.103)
Thatched Home Roof	0.000 (0.000)	0.019 (0.039)	0.007 (0.039)	0.250+ (0.141)
Other Material Roof	0.000 (0.000)	0.038 (0.060)	0.004 (0.055)	0.143 (0.563)
Fire Bricks Home	0.000 (0.000)	0.006 (0.066)	-0.055 (0.057)	0.272+ (0.164)
Mud Home	0.000 (0.000)	-0.083 (0.106)	-0.103 (0.108)	-0.088 (0.269)
Other Material Home	0.000 (0.000)	-0.207 (0.260)	-0.305 (0.271)	-1.452 (1.035)
Household Item Ownership Index	0.000 (0.000)	-0.006 (0.060)	0.005 (0.062)	0.187 (0.212)
Baseline Political Participation Level Index	0.000 (0.000)	0.013 (0.019)	0.020 (0.019)	0.180** (0.063)
Baseline Level Self Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)	-0.017 (0.014)	-0.023 (0.014)	0.091 (0.056)
Baseline Level Collective Efficacy	0.000 (0.000)	0.014 (0.013)	0.002 (0.014)	-0.048 (0.053)
Baseline Level Perceived Injustice	0.000 (0.000)	-0.006 (0.020)	0.000 (0.021)	-0.050 (0.062)
Lobola Paid (Individual)	0.000 (0.000)	0.004 (0.056)	-0.004 (0.057)	0.048 (0.175)
Lobola Paid (Community)	0.000 (0.000)	0.039 (0.049)	0.041 (0.051)	-0.173 (0.151)
Matrilocality (Individual)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.001 (0.060)	-0.022 (0.055)	0.192 (0.164)
Matrilocality (Community)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.032 (0.093)	-0.011 (0.063)	0.175 (0.245)
Matrilineal Kinship (Individual)	0.000 (0.000)	0.080 (0.057)	0.103+ (0.058)	0.020 (0.204)
Matrilineal Kinship (Community)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.025 (0.065)	-0.037 (0.062)	-0.109 (0.265)
Constant	0.000 (0.000)	0.119*** (0.021)	0.114*** (0.020)	0.286*** (0.057)
Num.Obs.	827	827	827	827
R2		0.260	0.243	0.305
R2 Adj.		0.089	0.068	0.144
RMSE	0.00	0.28	0.28	0.94
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

F.3 Mechanisms

Table SI.24: Mechanisms Results

	Collective Efficacy index	Discussion Frequency index	Group Iden- tification index	Perceived Injustice index	Procedural Knowledge index	Policy Preferences Coordina- tion	Self Efficacy index
Invited	0.097 (0.068)	-0.035 (0.074)	-0.078 (0.078)	-0.020 (0.074)	0.039 (0.069)	-0.020 (0.045)	0.074 (0.065)
Num.Obs.	827	827	827	827	827	826	827
R2	0.116	0.179	0.116	0.117	0.101	0.370	0.112
R2 Adj.	0.048	0.116	0.048	0.049	0.032	0.322	0.043
RMSE	0.91	1.03	1.06	1.13	1.02	0.83	0.96
Block FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Clusters	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	VSLA	
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001							

G Facilitators Guide

Women's Action for Local Development (WALD)

Facilitator's Guide

April 10, 2023

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Project Overview

This facilitator's guide is part of a project on Women's Action for Local Development (WALD). The project focuses on women's collective efficacy and political engagement in Malawi. It is part of a coordinated set of field experiments across five countries (EGAP's Metaketa V), that is aimed at developing and testing interventions to increase the quantity and quality of women's non-electoral forms of political participation. The Malawi intervention is designed to increase the demand women have for political knowledge and skills, as well as the supply of the relevant skillsets to participate effectively. The intervention randomizes trainings to women's village savings and loan associations (VSLA). The treatment is a series of collective efficacy training sessions delivered to women participants in VSLAs. At the group level, those in the treatment will attend facilitated sessions designed to engender a sense of gender-based collective efficacy. This will allow the project to test whether participating in a women's VLSA alone increases women's political participation and whether participating in trainings meant to foster collective efficacy offers an additional benefit. Ultimately the project will evaluate the effect of both the individual and group-level treatments on women's political interest and engagement around local public goods and services provision.

This Facilitator's Guide (FG) is intended for use by facilitators/trainers who will facilitate training on women's collective efficacy and political engagement. The FG provides trainers with the knowledge and skills required in the training of women participants of women's action committees. Group facilitators will receive extensive training in facilitating these sessions.

The training will cover two broad elements:

1. Political knowledge focusing on the structure and mandates of local government, funding issues, the development planning process and the role of citizens in the process and effective citizen political action. **This single-session training will be provided in ALL study communities.**
2. Collective efficacy training covering group identification, relative deprivation, rejection of legitimacy and collective action. **This three-session training will be provided in ONLY in treatment communities.**

High-Level Goals of the Political Knowledge Training

The political knowledge training is designed to provide women with information about:

1. How the development planning process is designed to work, including the actors and processes involved.
2. When and how community members are supposed to provide input on development planning.
3. How funding decisions are made and the types of projects that can be provided by local government.
4. Concrete details about who in particular holds various relevant positions in their community (e.g., VDC chairperson, ADC chairperson, local councilor).

High-Level Goals of Collective Efficacy Training Sessions

Each of the three collective efficacy sessions have these three “high-level” goals:

1. **Sense of group-based identity:** This part of the training will focus on building a sense of shared identity, interests, and needs. Participants will be encouraged to discuss their gender-specific priorities with each other with the aim of building a greater sense of gender solidarity.
2. **Politicized group identity:** Members of the group should recognize that they are marginalized in some way because of their gender. A perception of relative deprivation requires that women recognize that they have less influence than men in local decision making around service delivery.
3. **Perceived efficacy:** Third, effective collective action requires that individuals believe that group members should work together for change, and that such coordinated efforts can be effective. Such perceptions of collective efficacy give a constructive outlet for the discontent generated by group identification and its politicization. Participants will learn concrete methods for identifying community needs and mobilizing broad input. They will also receive training on how to get local councilors to respond to their needs in both public and private, including skills related to demand articulation, effective persuasion, and public speaking.

Your Role as Facilitator

The primary role of the facilitators is to conduct the training sessions. Facilitators should keep in mind that the way in which they conduct the training sessions will set the tone for the success of the trainings and the entire project. Some of the facilitation roles include the following:

ORGANIZING

- Facilitators are responsible for advertising the community grants program and give participants across villages information about how to apply.
- Facilitators are also responsible for the day's programme. It is advisable to begin a day's programme with exciting activities that warm up participants and break down barriers of shyness.
- As the programme progresses throw in exercises or energisers to prevent sleepiness, boredom, daydreaming, and information overload. The energisers must be culturally appropriate. Encourage participants to come up with their own energiser activities.
- Facilitators also attend normal VSLA meetings and collect data on attendance, participation, and backlash. How the training programme progresses in each session should be evaluated. It is advisable that facilitators should have a meeting to reflect on the way the training programme is progressing. Participants can be asked to choose representatives who will be overseeing day-to-day participant issues. These representatives should be part of the session evaluation meetings. Important issues emerging from the participants should be noted and there is need for flexibility in planning each day's work to meet the needs of the participants.

TEACHING

- Teaching in a participatory workshop requires flexibility. Your role as facilitator is to introduce and explain the various topics in the guide book. While trainers are required to give their inputs on the topic they are also required to allow participants to give their views and share their experiences so that they can apply what they learn to their concrete work situations.
- The facilitator should not just provide knowledge but should illustrate the various issues practically with the aid of examples. This is an important element of imparting 'how to skills' to participants.
- Facilitators need to be alert to the needs and level of experience and knowledge of the group throughout the workshop.

GUIDING

- This may be done individually or in a group. Providing guidance involves directing and steering the group discreetly but firmly.
- The emphasis of this training is on inducing change. Some participants may be obsessed with financial gains than the work itself. It is therefore important for trainers to guide and help participants so that their minds are focused on the training programme.
- Ensure that no single person or group dominates the training session. Normally in every group there are people who dominate because of their status or personality. Timid and

shy participants should be encouraged to be more confident and assertive, and the dominant learners to listen and let others have a chance.

COMMUNICATING

- The ability to communicate effectively with the participants will assist you in getting the information across. Some useful tips to assist you include:
- Adapt your use of language and your language style to suit the needs of your group. If you need to use technical terms ensure that your group understands what you are saying.
 - Speak clearly and slowly
 - Listen with empathy and an open mind
 - Use language that is not judgmental or critical
 - Listening is important

MONITORING AND REPORTING

At the beginning of EVERY session, after taking attendance but before the first activity, ask the women the following questions:

1. Has anyone heard any gossip or rumors about what is happening during these sessions?
[If so, discuss strategies for reducing any misinformation or community concerns.]
2. Has anyone had family members complain or pressure them into not participating in these sessions?
[If so, brainstorm strategies for de-escalating.]
3. Remind the women that they should reach out to you, the facilitator, via SMS or flashing, to report any threats, coercion, or physical violence that they experience as a consequence of their participation.

If there are problems identified in questions 1 and 2, above, please contact the field managers or a study PI after the session to discuss.

If anything is reported directly to you in response to reminder 3, above, immediately contact the study leads right away for next steps.

Some Tips on Effective Teaching Strategies

- Try to teach in an energetic style, using lots of expression and adding examples as necessary.
- Check to make sure that the participants understand the content as you go through it—look at their expressions, ask them to tell you what you have said in their own words, etc.
- Always teach using the words in the manual first, then explain further or translate as needed. Be careful not to change the meaning of the text when explaining or translating.
- Ask the participants questions and patiently probe for responses, but if they are unable to understand something after several tries, it is fine to give them the answer so that they do not become frustrated.
- Give positive feedback to women who participate and try to answer questions. Build on the answers they give you, restating their answer to bring it closer to the answer in the text, if needed.
- At the end of more complicated activities/discussions you'll find a "coach checklist" of the main concepts the participants should come away with. These points will have been covered in the discussion. However, you can use the checklist to determine if anything was missed. If so, take a moment to explain those points before moving to the takeaway. (Such as, "This was a great discussion, but one thing that didn't come up that we want to make sure you understand is ...")
- As you plan your time for each session, it's helpful to keep in mind that the participants will likely be more reserved in the first few activities. You will likely have to prompt them a bit more to speak up and discussions might take a little longer than they will later in the course, after the women have gotten more comfortable.

Checklist for Each Session

- ☐ Book the session (date, time, place) in collaboration with the VSLA contact.
- ☐ Arrange for refreshments to be provided at the session.
- ☐ Send a reminder to the VSLA contact the night before the scheduled session.
- ☐ Take attendance at the meeting for each of the VSLA members on the roster. Record this in the tablet form for that session.
- ☐ Ask the monitoring questions to assess any potential backlash. Report any concerns raised right away to the study team.
- ☐ Confirm each activity that was completed on the tablet form for that session.
- ☐ Record data and any notes on the session on the tablet form for that session.
- ☐ Upload a photograph of the group from that session.

Session 1

(control and treatment)

Materials Needed:

- Large notepad
- Permanent marker
- Name and contact information for all VDC members and local councilor
- Local Government Structure Card
- Democratic Principles Card Set
- District-Funded Projects Card Set
- Community Grants Program Card

Activity 1.1 (30 minutes): VSL Goals and Opportunities in Local Government

GOALS

This activity is designed to:

- Provide basic information about how local government works
- Provide information about the community grants program

Lead a group discussion of the following questions related to their motivation for joining the VSLA group. On the large notepad, write out the responses, adding check marks next to any comments that repeat those already mentioned.

- Why did you join the VSL? What goals did you hope to achieve?

Based on the list of different motivations for joining the VSL, ask the following question about whether and how better local services (e.g., education, health care, water, transportation, markets, sanitation, etc.) might also help achieve those goals.

- How would better local service provision (public goods) address some of those needs?

End this activity by stating clearly:

Local governments in Malawi have a legal mandate to provide local development based on the input of from local residents. Next, we will learn about how that process is supposed to work.

Activity 1.2 (30 minutes): Local Government Structures & Development Planning

Materials Needed:

- Local Government Structure card
- Democratic principles card set

GOALS

By the end of this information session women should be able to:

- Name the primary actors in the development planning process
- Understand the order in which development planning happens
- Know what a Village Development Plan is
- Understand where citizen input fits into the development planning process

Use the Local Government Structure card and walk the women through each step in the development planning process:

1. Citizens provide input about community needs to the Village Development Committee (VDC). There is one VDC per Group Village.
2. The VDC comes up with a prioritized list of proposed development projects in the village, which is called the Village Action Plan. The Village Action Plan is given to the Area Development Committee (ADC). There is one ADC per TA.
3. The ADC looks at the Village Action Plans from all the VDCs within the TA and makes a prioritized list of development projects for the area. This is called the Area Action Plan. The ADC submits the Area Action Plan to the District Council.
4. The District Council reviews all the Area Development Plans within the district and then produces a District Development Plan. The District Development plan is supposed to guide decisions about which projects the local government will fund.

Pause to give the women a chance to ask questions about the structure and process.

Next, emphasize that the development planning process is guided by three democratic principles. Give each term and ask the women what they think it means. Be sure to emphasize the definitions below after the women have had a chance to provide their understanding of the terms. You can also ask the follow up questions for each term.

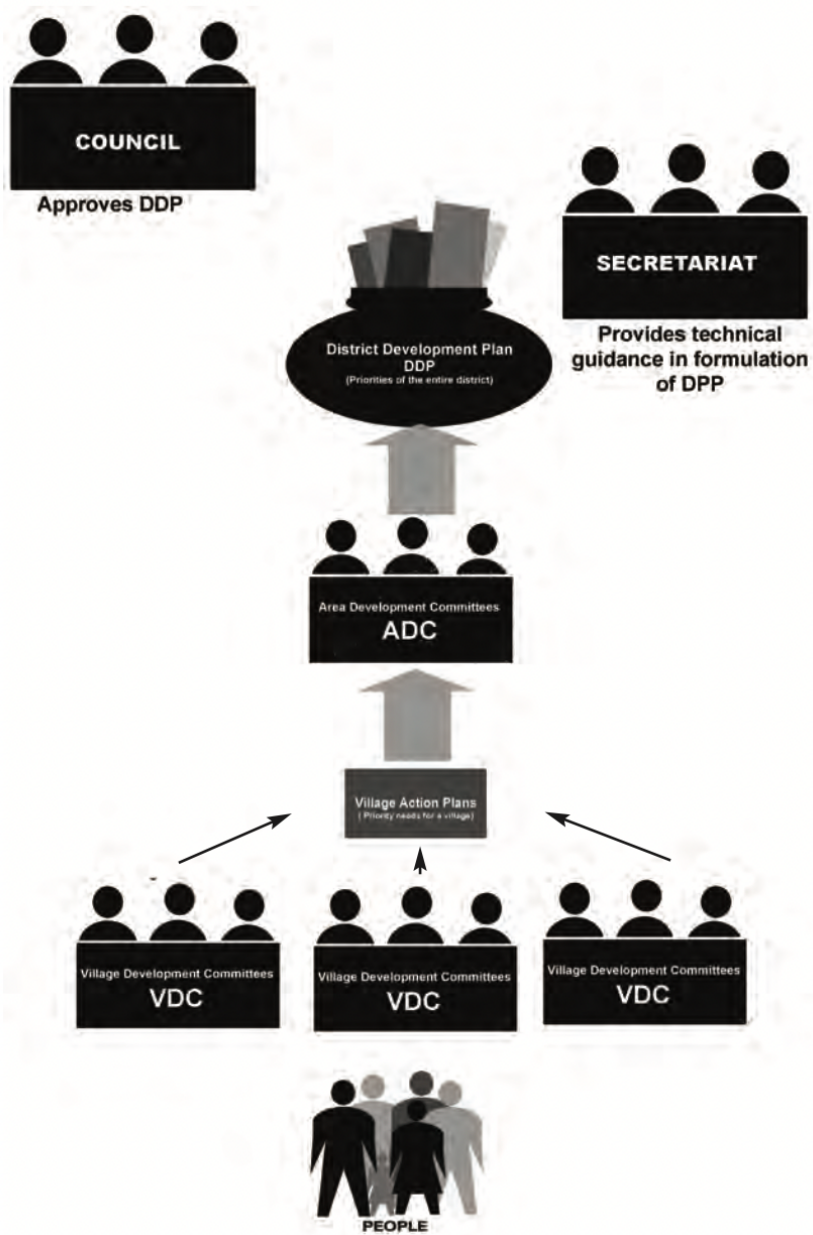
- **Participation:** regular citizens are supposed to provide input on local development needs in their community
 - How does the VDC receive input from residents of this community?
- **Transparency:** regular citizens have a right to know what development projects are being proposed by their VDC and ADC, which projects are funded by the District, and how much was spent on each project.
 - How are residents in this community able to know what their VDC is doing?

- **Accountability:** members of the VDC, ADC, and district council work for regular citizens and must be accountable to them
 - How are members of the VDC, ADC, and local council held accountable in this community?

Provide the names (supplied by the research team) of all the members of their community's own VDC and member of the Council:

- VDC chairperson:
- VDC vice chairperson:
- VDC secretary:
- VDC treasurer:
- Other VDC members:
- Local councilor:

An Illustration of the District Development Planning Process



Activity 1.3 (30 minutes): Local Government Funding

Materials Needed:

- District funded projects card set

The aim of this activity is to help the women understand:

- The types of projects that local government can fund through the development planning process
- The scale/scope of feasible projects
- Where local government funding comes from

Sometimes citizens overestimate the kinds of projects that their local government can fund. In reality, local governments can provide only those projects that are within their mandate, such as primary schools, health centres and maternity posts, water boreholes, or bridges and culverts on local feeder roads. They cannot build large projects such as secondary schools, district hospitals or main highways. Here are some example projects that have been completed by your district government in the past (use the District Funded Projects card set as illustrations).

How are these projects funded? Explain the following funding sources:

District Development Funds (DDF)

This is a development funding mechanism through which government provides a certain sum of money to each local government to use for local projects. The rules of the DDF are that projects to be funded should be extracted from the District Development Fund. Decisions on which project to fund are made by the Council. Feedback to communities is provided through the councillor and the T/A who sit on the council. Therefore, establishing contact with the councillor is an essential aspect of citizen power and ensuring that our he/she is made aware and is reminded of community needs that can potentially be funded under this fund

Constituent Development Funds (CDF)

This is a development funding mechanism through which government provides a certain sum of money to each constituency but through local government to use for local projects. The Member of Parliament (MP) is the central actor on this fund. The rules require that identification of projects to fund should be done in collaboration with community Decisions on which project to fund are usually made by the MP. Therefore, establishing contact with the MP is an essential aspect of citizen power and ensuring that our he/she is made aware and is reminded of community needs that can potentially be funded under this fund

Activity 1.4 (15 minutes): Community Grants Programme

Materials Needed:

- Community grants program card

Briefly provide an overview of the planned grants program:

- In partnership with local government, there will be an open competition for local development grants. Anyone in this district can submit a proposal for a development project in their community.
- Applications will be provided in May 2023 by district extension workers.
- Proposals will be due to the Village Development Committee by May 30, 2023.
- The VDC will forward the strongest proposals to the Area Development Committee, which will again forward the strongest proposals to the District
- The District Council will decide which projects are funded.
- The maximum budget for each proposal is 1 million MWK.
- Five projects will be funded within your district.

More information will be provided to all VDCs before the grants competition is launched.

Session 2

Session Materials needed:

- Beads or some other way to designate their own confidence
- Dry erase markers to draw on blank laminated cards
- Confidence Card Set
- Genders Card Set
- Activities Card Set
- Barriers Card Set
- Additional blank laminated cards to supplement the ones above

Activity 2.1 (30 minutes): Women's confidence:

Note: We will run this session again at the end of the last training, asking women to reflect on whether their confidence has improved over the course of the training.

Materials needed:

- Confidence Card Set
- Beads or some other way to designate their own confidence

GOALS

This activity is meant to convey the following:

- That women are not alone in not feeling confident sometimes. Many women feel this way.
- There may be similar circumstances that make women doubt their confidence; for instance: when they are in a large group, when they doubt their knowledge about an issue, or when there are others present who intimidate them (local leaders, elders, chiefs, men, etc.)

The facilitator has three cards depicting a woman with varying degrees of confidence: a woman too timid to enter group meeting, a woman joining a group meeting but too shy to participate, and a woman who participates, talks, and asks questions. Explain each image. Ask women in turn to place a bead (or in some other way) to indicate which best represent themselves.

[RECORD the number on each in the tablet questionnaire for this session]

After each participant has placed her bead, the facilitator asks the group to reflect on what contributes to the women's feelings of inclusion, confidence, and participation. This discussion can be based around the following questions:

- Can you think of a time that felt confident in participating in a group discussion and a time when you did not feel confident?
- What makes you feel more confident? And what makes you feel less confident?

Activity 2.2 (1 hour): Activity Mapping

Materials needed:

- Activities Card Set
- Gender Card Set
- Additional blank laminated cards to supplement the ones above
- Dry erase markers to draw on blank laminated cards

GOALS

This activity is meant to convey the following:

- Men and women do different types of tasks in the villages
- Some respondents may feel that this division between men and women means that women's priorities are not reflected in local decision-making. Others may find that the lack of women in decision-making is OK.
- It's OK if there are disagreements here.

Ask participants to think about all the activities they did the day before. From the list of cards that you have, pull out the card associated with each activity. This includes activities such as cooking breakfast, collecting water, resting, working in the fields, selling goods at the market, or participating in a community meeting. If participants list an activity for which you do not have a card, write or draw what the participant says on a blank card.

Once you have laid out all the cards that women have mentioned, ask participants to categorize each card into one of three groups using the Gender Card Set: 1) tasks / activities mostly done by women; 2) tasks / activities mostly done by men; 3) tasks / activities done equally by men and women.

After the group has sorted these activities into the three groups, lead a discussion based around the following questions:

- Why do you think some activities are done more by women and some are done more by men?
- Do you think these experiences mean that men and women have different priorities in the community about what development needs should be addressed first?
- What does it mean when women are not able to add their voices to development decisions?
- Do you think this is fair or unfair?

Activity 2.3 (1 hour): Importance of Participation

Materials needed:

- Barriers Card Set

GOALS

This activity is meant to convey the following:

- Women in Malawi face common barriers in participating in politics and development planning
- These barriers are very difficult to overcome, and require a lot of strength and courage to face

Ask the participants to break into small groups of three or four. Ask each group to think of major barriers that prevent women from participating in development planning in their village. Tell each group that one member will be asked to present their thoughts to entire group.

After each group has presented their reasons, begin a discussion with the entire group, based on the following script:

There are many barriers that prevent women from participating in the development planning process of their village. Before the barriers are removed, they need to be identified. You have already mentioned many of them.

Others in Malawi have identified the following barriers which prevent women from actively participating in the development planning process and decision-making more broadly. I'm going to read aloud each one, and after each, let's discuss whether you notice this barrier taking place in your community.

Use the **Barriers Card Set** as you explain each potential barriers. After reading each one, ask the women whether they have noticed something similar in Malawi.

Culture: Development planning and politics is traditionally viewed as a man's game. These beliefs are conveyed in the media and in everyday language such as "a hen cannot crow." Women who reach high decision-making levels face negative attitudes ranging from reluctance to open hostility. Men and women are traditionally reluctant to support female aspirants for any public position to which men and women aspire. Similarly, political parties do not encourage female members to stand for any position of authority.

Caring: Women continue to bear most of the responsibility for caring and domestic work within the family. The traditional woman's prime years are taken up with having babies and looking after young children. This coupled with hours spent in food preparation, child-care and maintaining the family in addition to earning an income, place heavy demands on women's time leaving little time for political activities. So juggling children and family responsibilities is a major obstacle to women deciding to enter politics.

Cash/Poverty: Since men are traditionally the breadwinners, women do not have the financial and other resources to enable them to run effectively for public office and win. The day-to-day struggle for existence leaves no time or resources to even consider a political career. Candidates require money to campaign, money that women often simply do not have. Parties may provide political funding or support for candidates, but often candidates have to fund their own campaigns. Lack of resources is a particular problem for women in situations where politicians are expected to provide gifts to voters in exchange for their support.

Confidence: Many women lack the confidence and assertiveness to participate in politics. The sharp divide between the public sphere, which is perceived as men's and the private sphere, which is perceived as women's makes it not surprising that many women lack the confidence and self-esteem to embark on careers that would expose them to competing with men.

Corruption: Corrupt practices and violence during elections and campaigning have stopped women from exercising their rights on an equal footing with men.

Capability: A certain level of education is often an informal requirement for participating in politics. The high level of illiteracy and poor education and negative images in the media about women's role make women reluctant to step forward into leadership roles. They lack knowledge about how being in politics could influence and change their everyday lives.

Session 2 Homework

Assignment: as you carry out your daily tasks this month, please reflect on what local development projects could assist you in completing your work more quickly or more effectively. We encourage you to check in with each other to see if you are identifying similar needs.

Session 3

Session Materials

- Activities Card Set
- Locations Card Set

Activity 3.1 (1 hour): Women's and Girls' Lives - Needs Assessment:

Materials

- Activities Card Set
- Large notepad
- Permanent marker

GOALS

This activity is meant to convey the following:

- There are many tasks that women and girls perform that could be made easier and less time consuming by bringing new development into the village

Place the Activities Card Set that depict various daily tasks often performed by women and girls on the floor. Ask participants to categorize them along a two-dimensional grid (2x2) that is drawn on a large notepad sheet: easiest to perform v. hardest to perform & least time consuming to most time consuming

After the participants have sorted the tasks, say out loud to the group the tasks that are in the quadrant that represents the most time consuming and most difficult to perform. After this, lead a discussion based around the following questions:

- Thinking about these tasks, do you think there are ways to make these activities less time-consuming or less difficult to perform?
- What types of development or initiatives would help you achieve the goals of making these tasks easier (e.g., a new borehole closer to the village will reduce time spent collecting water)

Activity 3.2 (1 – 1.5 hours): Card mapping and Prioritisation

Materials

- Locations Card Set

GOALS

This activity is meant to convey the following:

- Women often have similar ideas about what issues in the community deserve prioritization.
- Many women will support you if you think that a certain issue in the community needs attention

The facilitator comes with cards with issue areas drawn on them (e.g., a well, a school, a hospital, etc.) As a first activity, the facilitator can ask participants to list specific problems in their community that they think are associated with each of these cards if any (e.g., the hospital is often out of supplies). She can also carry a blank card and use it to write or draw other issues that might come up that are not contained in the cards.

After this, the group can sort the cards in order discussing which they think should be most prioritized in the community, down to what they think is the lowest priority. [Note: if the group is large, more than 10 women, ask the women to first break into smaller groups of 3-4 to do this task together and report back to the whole group.]

After the group (or groups) have sorted the cards, lead a discussion based around the following questions:

- Why did you put the issues first that you did? Why do you think these are particularly pressing to your community?

Session 3 Homework

Assignment: Pay attention to how different women in your community participate in public life this month. Pay particular attention to the following two aspects:

1. **When and where do you see women speaking up and advocating for themselves?**
2. **How do other community members respond to women who advocate for themselves in public spaces?**

Session 4

Session Materials

- Large notepad
- Permanent marker
- Beads or some other way to designate their own confidence
- Confidence Card Set

Activity 4.1 (1 hour): Gatekeeper Listing

Materials

- Large notepad
- Permanent marker

GOALS

This activity is meant to convey the following:

- There are people in the community that have more power than others.
- These people are typically men.
- Together, we can think of ways that we might be able to convince these people to act on behalf of the community.

Ask the group to brainstorm: What does it mean to say that someone is a gatekeeper? Take a few responses and go on to give the group the following definition:

A gatekeeper is an attendant at a gate who is employed to control who goes through it. When we say that someone is a gatekeeper for something it means that they control access to something.

Ask the respondents to guide you as you draw up a table with different columns for key stakeholders, gatekeepers (formal and informal), and people who know gatekeepers. On the left, list all the stakeholders you need to influence, but cannot access. This could include people you need information or permission from to do something. It could also include the decision-makers you hope to convince to take action in your favor.

After you have created this list, guide the respondents in a discussion based on the following questions:

- Do you think that these people are accessible to people like you? Why or why not?
- How do you think these people became gatekeepers?
- What are ways that you might be able to influence these people?

Activity 4.2 (1 hour): Practicing public speaking

GOALS

This activity is meant to help respondents:

- Think through what makes an effective speech
- Practice speaking in public in a low-stress setting
- Think through how to handle an antagonist situation

Now you will lead the group in an activity where they will practice speaking in public, like they might do at a village meeting organized by the VDC. Start with the following script:

The way you present yourself to an audience and the manner in which you deliver whatever you want them to hear is what is going to determine how successful your message is.

Now lead the participants in a small group task. Ask the women to get into groups of three to four. In their groups, ask participants to think about an issue in the community that they care about and prepare a short speech of 1-3 minutes duration introducing themselves, and the issue that they care about. Before they begin, brainstorm how participants would prepare for speechmaking, asking them to keep in mind the following suggestions:

- Think about your aims and objectives. What are you trying to achieve?
- Identify and prepare one simple and brief message related to your objectives
- State one issue that is of interest to the audience.

Example:

- Know your message: A new school in the community
- Clarify your aim: To convince the audience to support putting resources towards a new school
- Identify and prepare a message: We need a new school so that our children do not have to walk so far every day to attend classes.
- Make mention of issues that are of interest: If our children can go to school longer, they will be able to contribute more to the community in the long run.

Ask the women to spend a few minutes thinking about their speech. After they are done, they can practice giving the speech to their small group asking for feedback. You can go around to each group and offer advice as well.

After this small group exercise, ask everyone to come back together and lead the group in the following discussion:

- What made for a successful speech?
- What challenges did you feel when crafting your speech?

After this discussion, you will ask for a volunteer from the group to play the part of an aggressive person who tries to shut someone down when they speak up at the community meeting. You, the facilitator, will model two different ways to respond to such antagonism.

Role Play 1

Instructions to the volunteer: as soon as the facilitator starts trying to speak, stand up and shout at her that she should not be speaking up because she is a woman or she is not educated enough. Encourage the volunteer to embellish the role of an antagonizer in whatever way she feels is appropriate.

Facilitator role: respond to the interruption and aggression by shutting up and sitting down, looking ashamed.

Role Play 2

Instructions to the volunteer: same as above

Facilitator role: respond to the interruption and aggression by shouting back with aggression. See the example below.

Facilitator: So, as I was saying, if you vote for more women...

Volunteer: Just get out. You are all thieves. You just want to wear fine clothes and drive big cars with the money you've...

Facilitator: Who are you calling a thief?

Volunteer: You!

Facilitator: (Advances threateningly): If you call me a thief once more I'll show you who I am.

Role Play 3

Instructions to the volunteer: same as above

Facilitator role: respond to the interruption and aggression by shouting back with aggression. See the example below.

Facilitator: So, as I was saying, if you vote for more women...

Volunteer: Just get out. You are all thieves. You just want to wear fine clothes and drive big cars with the money you have stolen. After we've voted for you, you will forget all about us and we will always be poor and out of work.

Facilitator: My friend, I know how you feel. This is how things have been in the past but we want to change all that. That's why I'm here.

Volunteer: It's all lies.

Facilitator: Why don't you try me first? Everybody is not the same, you know.

After these role plays, ask the women to discuss: which one handled the negative situation better? What did she do that helped?

Activity 4.3 (1 hour): Lobbying

GOALS

This activity is meant to help participants think through and practice the steps that they need to lobby effectively.

Ask the group to brainstorm: What is lobbying? Take a few responses and go on to give the group the following definition:

A lobby is a waiting room where people wait to meet others. When you lobby, you try to get a policy or decision-maker to change a policy or decision.

Then lead a discussion on lobbying based on the following script:

Here are some ways that you might be able to lobby for what you want:

- Talk to individuals or groups that you want support from.
- Organize a meeting with them to see if you can form one group that agrees on at least two or three main points.
- Approach influential people in the community who would agree to represent you. Brief them well.

Think about the following for the issue that you care about:

Where are decisions about your issue made?

- Nationally?
- At the district level?
- At community level?

Who needs to be lobbied? Think about how you are going to reach these people.

- Politicians or those in close contact with them?
- Organizations that have influence?
- Chiefs or other community leaders?

Here are some ways that you can go about lobbying:

- Get an appointment with the decision-makers.
- Decide whether your visit should include your support group or just you and one or two others, i.e., should it be a formal or informal meeting.
- Prepare your case well.
- Plan for a short meeting at which you will make your points at a given time.

Before the meeting, brainstorm: Why should these people support you? You need to convince and persuade them that you have their best interests at heart and that together, you can work to change things and improve their situation.

Next lead the group in a small group activity:

Ask participants to break up into groups of 3 to 4 women each. Each group will decide one issue they would want to lobby on (it could be the issue that they prioritized in the previous activity).

After they have agreed on an issue, they should do the following:

- Think of a list of those individuals or groups who could be affected by the issue.
- Think who they should target with their lobbying (local councilor, chief, MP, etc.)
- Think of the message that they want to convey to this leader

At the end of the exercise, each group leader should present these items to whole group: i.e., what issue their group wants to lobby on, who would be affected by the issue, who they should target with their lobbying, and what message they would convey to this leader.

Activity 4.4 (30 min): Women's confidence (second time)

Materials needed:

- Confidence Card Set
- Beads or some other way to designate their own confidence

GOALS

The aim of this activity is for the women to reflect on the skills that they have learned in the course and hopefully give them a sense that they are better prepared to participate in the development of their villages.

The facilitator has three cards depicting a woman with varying degrees of confidence: a woman too timid to enter group meeting, a woman joining a group meeting but too shy to participate, and a woman who participates, talks, and asks questions. Explain each image. Ask women in turn to place beads or in some way indicate which best represent themselves.

[RECORD the number on each in the tablet questionnaire for this session]

After each participant has placed all her seeds, the facilitator asks the group to reflect on what contributes to the women's feelings of inclusion, confidence, and participation and how the training sessions have helped the women gain confidence. This discussion can be based around the following questions:

- Do you feel more confident now in participating in politics than you did before these sessions?
- If not, what are the barriers that you still feel that you face?
- If yes, what activities were particularly helpful.

Session 4 Homework

Assignment: Challenge yourself to try at least once to take an active role in community decision-making sometime in the next month using the skills practiced today.

Appendices

Toolkit Contents

- Printed and bound facilitator's guide
- Attendance rosters for each VSL
- Tablet for capturing information about the meeting
- Beads or seeds for allocation decisions (100)
- Dry erase markers
- Pens
- Permanent markers
- Large notepad
- Printed/laminated card sets (see list on next page)

Laminated Card Sets

- **Local Government Structure Card (Activity 1.2)**
- **Democratic Principles Card Set (Activity 1.2)**
 - Kutengapo mbali (Participation) – draw picture of men and women attending VDC meeting... remember to depict rural setting
 - Kuziwa zinthu popanda kufusa (Transparency) – draw a picture of MP supervising a district hospital which is being renovated with funds from the World Bank. Somewhere in the picture, there should be a sign post reading Chitukuko chothandizidwa ndi Word bank (Project funded by World Bank).
 - Kukulongosolelani momveka mukafusa (Accountability) – draw a picture of community members attending a meeting and district council officials are captured holding papers explaining expenditure on borehole project.
- **District-funded Projects Card Set (Activity 1.3)**
 - Toilet block at a school
 - Health center + maternity post
 - Water borehole
 - Bridges or culverts on local feeder roads
- **Community Grants Programme Card (Activity 1.4)**
 - Based on example provided in Notes document
- **Confidence Card Set (Activity 2.1; Activity 4.4)**
 - Low confidence: Amake Mary. She should be alone at home in chitenje seated at nkonde depicting low confidence.
 - Medium confidence: Amake Jane. A picture of several women attending a community meeting but amake Jane sits at a distance and looking down at her lap because she is shy (depicting less confidence). She sits few metres away from the group.
 - High confidence: Amake Rose. Picture of women attending community meeting like picture B of amake Jane but in this scenario amake Rose is standing and speaking to the group. The picture should show amake Rose making gestures since she has high confidence
- **Genders Card Set (Activity 2.2)** -- drawings should be on separate big boards, coloured and visible from a distance, and should depict rural people
 - Drawing of a man
 - Drawing of a woman
 - Drawing of one man and one woman (Same board)
- **Activities Card Set (Activity 2.2; Activity 3.1)** –
 - Kuphika (cooking) – drawing of pot of water on three stone fire
 - Kutunga madzi- drawing of a borehole

- Kupita kuchipatala ndiodwala – drawing of a clinic
 - Kusamalira matenda – drawing of child sleeping on a mat and Panadol is seen on the mat
 - Kusuka bale – drawing of dirty plates, cups and pots
 - Kupita kuchigayo – drawing of maize mill
 - Kupita kumunda – drawing of a garden
 - Kuchapa – drawing of clothes drying, ropes are tied to two poles
 - Kupita kumsonkhano wachitukuko – both men and women attending community meeting under a tree
 - Kupita kumsonkhano wokhuza sukulu ya ana- drawing of both men and women attending meeting at primary school. Sign post indicating name of the school should be seen.
 - Kupita kumsonkhano wa tchalitchi – Drawing of church and mosque
 - Kupanga bisnesi – drawing of market---name of market and shops should be clear
 - Kucheza – drawing of bawo
 - Kuphuzitsa/kulangiza ana – drawing of an elder (gender cannot be determined) standing and kids seated and looking up to the person. One of the kids can be raising a hand as if asking a question
 - Forest- drawing of forest and dead wood is seen lying everywhere
 - Khanso – drawing of government structures
 - Nyumba - drawing of a house
 - Socializing – drawing of a woman chatting and laughing with friends one side, drawing of a man chatting and laughing with friends on the other side
- **Barriers Card Set (Activity 2.3)** -- the following words (Culture, Caring, Cash/Poverty, Confidence, Corruption, Capability) have been translated in that order and we want the Chichewa version on each separate small board. You may use your discretion for the board size but try to make the words visible from far. Here we also need the following pictures
- Chikhalidwe -drawing of map of Malawi (capture flag colour) inside the map, one man should be seen reading while woman carrying fire wood. Another man should be seen riding a bicycle while woman walking)
 - Kusamalira khomo/ana – drawing of a woman cooking and carrying a child on her back
 - Ndalama/Umphawi – drawing of bunch of money
 - Kuzikhulupirira – drawing of a woman attending a meeting and speaking with gestures. In the same picture, another woman is shy/
 - Katangale – Drawing of a smiling man greeting the village headman at the same time extending a bunch of money
 - Kuthekela – drawing of a woman sitting on the mat and reading a book
- **Locations Card Set (Activity 3.2)** – a subset of the same drawings from the Activities Card Set. Make a new set of cards, but NOT new drawings

- Water source (Kotunga madzi)
- Firewood source (Kotola nkuni)
- Boma (local council) (Kukhaso)
- Community meeting place (Kusonkhano)
- Market (Kunsika)
- Garden/field (Kumunda)
- Home (Kunyumba)
- Clinic (Kuchipatala)
- School (Kuskulu)

Tablet Forms Contents: One Form Completed After Each Session

Date

Time Scheduled

Facilitator Name (dropdown)

Community Name (dropdown)

GPS capture

Session Number (dropdown)

Time Started

Time Ended

Attendance: auto-populate with names from baseline, plus space for additional names beyond the sample: mark each present or absent

Activity Reports (separate page for each activity, autopopulated)

- Completed [Y/N]
 - If N, explain
- Outcomes (if applicable, activity specific)
 - E.g., number of women for each confidence level in activity 2.1 and 4.4
- Text box for comments (observations, problems, etc.)

Session Report

- Overall level of engagement [Low, Medium, High]
- Any outsiders present? [Yes, No]
 - If yes:
 - Chief
 - VDC
 - Men, husband(s) of members
 - Men, non-family members of members
 - Women, not members of VSLA
 - Children of members
- Text box for comments (observations, problems, etc.)

H Meta-Analysis Paper

Women's Group Empowerment Can Increase Political Participation: Evidence from Five Coordinated Field Experiments

Authors' names withheld

June 6, 2026

Abstract

Non-electoral forms of political participation are critical for leaders to respond to citizens' preferences, yet highly unequal between men and women. This article presents five coordinated field experiments comparing a multifaceted women's group empowerment intervention designed to reduce group-based psychological constraints on non-electoral political participation with an information-only placebo. On the core behavioral outcomes and parallel survey measures, the meta-analytic results show that the intervention caused positive and significant increases in the level and quality of women's participation. Behavioral measures of elite responsiveness increased in three studies, and perceptions of elite responsiveness to women's participation increased in two studies. Effects on potential mechanisms were more varied, but efficacy beliefs, perceived injustice, preference coordination, and procedural knowledge generally increased in the three studies with the largest effects on outcomes. In short, a group-based empowerment intervention that aims to reduce psychological constraints to participation can increase non-electoral political participation by women.

1 Introduction and Motivation

Non-electoral forms of political participation, such as attending town halls and contacting local officials, are critical for political representation and accountability, yet are often unequal across different groups in society. Such inequity in participation and voice in politics, exemplified by the gap between men’s and women’s participation in many countries, can have important distributional outcomes. Despite many large-scale efforts in both developing and developed countries, few interventions have proven capable of increasing the political participation of marginalized groups.¹ Can an intervention that aims to empower women by alleviating psychological barriers effectively increase the non-electoral political participation of this important and commonly marginalized group? If so, does this also lead to greater responsiveness by local public officials?

Although rates of electoral participation such as registration and voting are often similar across genders, non-electoral forms of political participation tend to be significantly lower among women.² Global survey data shows that women across Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East are less likely to participate in political meetings or organizations, work for parties or candidates, attend protests or demonstrations, sign petitions, or contact officials, even in countries in which men and women vote at similar rates (Isaksson, Kotsadam and Nerman, 2014; Espinal and Zhao, 2015; Prillaman, 2017; Liu, 2020).

Many of the barriers that prevent women from participating in politics are structural. Women participate less in politics due to lower financial and informational resources (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001; Inglehart et al., 2003; Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2008), gendered care responsibilities (Bernhard, Shames and Teele, 2021), active constraints by male family members (Cheema et al., 2023; Brulé and Gaikwad, 2021; Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021), and threats of physical violence (Clayton et al., 2020; Krook, 2020). Women are also less likely to be recruited to participate in politics (Fox and Lawless, 2010; Khan, 2021). Acknowledging these powerful and durable structural barriers to women’s political participation, this study evaluates whether an intervention that

¹Several studies have analyzed interventions aimed at increasing the electoral participation of other marginalized citizens across a variety of contexts. See, for example, Bedolla and Michelson (2012); Clayton (2015); Harris, Kamindo and van der Windt (2021); Bobo and Gilliam (1990). Prillaman (2023*a,b*) studies women’s self-help groups.

²For evidence from a wide range of contexts, see Iversen and Rosenbluth (2006); Desposato and Norrander (2009); Bennett and Bennett (1989); Tambe and Jormfeldt (2024); Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001); Atkeson and Rapoport (2003); Fox and Lawless (2010); Mansbridge (1999); Verba, Burns and Schlozman (1997); Prillaman (2023*a*).

alleviates psychological obstacles to political participation can nevertheless mobilize women.³

In the political science literature, the testing of interventions to increase political participation in developing countries has focused largely on the role of resources, especially information, in enabling and enhancing political participation. However, many studies have found that information alone is not enough to increase the participation of marginalized groups (see, for example, Lieberman, Posner and Tsai (2014); Dunning et al. (2019); Adida et al. (2020)), even when it is provided in sustained, facilitated, small-group meetings (Arkedis et al., 2021). In some cases, information can actually reduce women’s political participation by inducing backlash against behavior that breaks gender norms (Gottlieb, 2016*b*). Providing economic resources through employment also does not necessarily increase women’s political participation (Kjelsrud and Kotsadam, 2023; Aalen et al., 2024; Blair and Mvukiyehe, 2025).

One explanation for the ineffectiveness of increasing resources is that women also differentially face psychological barriers to participation that prevent them from using the resources that are available. Even after accounting for differences in resources, a persistent gender gap in participation remains. Candidate explanations for this gap include differences in beliefs, socialization, and internalized norms by gender (Atkeson and Rapoport, 2003; Preece, 2016; Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014). Gendered differences in perceived political efficacy, or beliefs about one’s ability to alter one’s environments, are common (Bandura, 1977; Preece, 2016). Giving marginalized groups access to increased resources, including information, may be a necessary but insufficient condition for collective action, as group members may need to change the way they view themselves and their position in society to envision increased political participation as appropriate, possible, and even necessary.

This study presents a pre-registered meta-analysis of five coordinated field experiments that introduced and experimentally tested a women’s group empowerment intervention designed to reduce group-based psychological constraints on non-electoral political participation. Together, the five study sites included 16,148 women, 1,002 clusters, 2,781 treatment-arm group meetings, and 595 placebo-arm group meetings. The coordinated studies were carried out by separate research teams selected through a competitive call for proposals in five countries: Kyrgyzstan, Malawi,

³Note that Brulé (2023) highlights significant innovation around gender and participation in the Global South.

Nigeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam.⁴ The five countries differ on many dimensions, but are all places in which women do not participate on equal footing in political life, and are also all hybrid regimes which are not fully democratic despite holding elections.

Women’s groups in both the treatment and placebo conditions received information about how to participate in the politics of local service delivery. In the placebo-control groups, research teams provided top-down information that could in principle have helped subjects to clarify their political choices and better understand how to intervene in the political process. The placebo resembled previous informational interventions that are common in many existing field experiments. In the treatment condition, the women’s groups also received a series of facilitated meetings organized around participatory activities to increase recognition of shared injustices among women, increase the salience of participants’ identities as women, and highlight the collective efficacy of the women’s groups—and individuals within the groups—to engage in non-electoral forms of political participation. The intervention takes inspiration from existing programs and theories in social psychology, especially the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008) and Bandura’s (1977) theory of efficacy beliefs, elaborated below.

The intervention and outcomes focus specifically on non-electoral forms of political participation, because in hybrid regimes, such actions may be the best option available to change policies or improve public services, though they have received less attention than direct participation in elections.⁵ Furthermore, the gender gap in political participation is highest for non-electoral participation in many contexts (see Footnote 2). If increasing non-electoral political participation can increase responsiveness and influence local service provision, it may be of particular importance in contexts in which politicians are not motivated by electoral accountability to respond to citizens’ demands.

The results show that the intervention increased participation in a community grants program, the central behavioral measure, by an average of 11 percentage points, with positive and significant effects in all five individual experiments. This grant competition was run by a separate organization from the intervention programming, so that it could serve as an independent measure of political

⁴For the preregistered meta-analysis for this project, see *URL MASKED*. Individual research articles prepared by each team provide rich details on country context, local implementation, measurement, and specialized subgroup effects.

⁵Though see also Burns, Schlozman and Verba (2001); Christensen et al. (2021); Gottlieb (2016*a,b*).

participation.

The intervention also increased the quality of participation: we observe increases in the relevance, clarity, and degree of collaboration on the community grants. In self-reported survey measures, the intervention is associated with positive and significant changes in levels of participation and quality of participation in two out of five studies. Effects on elite responsiveness were not significant overall, but treated women were more likely to see a grant funded in Vietnam, Pakistan, and Nigeria, and more likely to report elite responsiveness in Malawi and Nigeria.

The study did not randomize mechanisms and our treatment is multifaceted, so we cannot conclusively establish which part of the intervention or causal mechanism is driving these outcomes. However, our estimates of the effects on our theorized mechanisms suggest that efficacy beliefs and perceived injustice were moved the most reliably by the intervention, while there was no effect on group identification. Collective efficacy increased in the two sites with the largest effects on outcomes, and self-efficacy beliefs about political participation increased in four studies. The intervention also increased policy preferences concentration in three studies, procedural knowledge in two studies, and political discussion networks in one study.

These studies represent one of the first large-scale field-experimental tests of whether a group-based empowerment intervention aimed at reducing psychological barriers to collective action can increase political participation, particularly in the developing world. Efficacy beliefs in particular have been central to many theories of political participation and collective action in psychology and political science.⁶ We build on pioneering research testing group empowerment interventions with women and minority groups in the US (Preece, 2016; Bedolla and Michelson, 2012) and in developing country settings (McClendon and Riedl, 2015, 2019; Lieberman and Zhou, 2022; McClendon, Sperber and Kaaba, 2025; Mvukiyehe, 2025). Our study differs from most existing political science literature by focusing explicitly on collective efficacy and an intervention delivered in a group-based setting, as most existing political science work on participation targets individual attitudes and behaviors.

This study is also closely tied to work in political science and sociology on the role of participant-

⁶See, for example, the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) (van Zomeren, Spears and Leach, 2008; van Zomeren, 2013), from which we draw direct inspiration, Klandermans’s (1984, 1997) arguments about expectations of success of group-based action, Campbell et al.’s (1960) arguments about internal and external political efficacy, Verba, Schlozman and Brady’s (1995) model of civic voluntarism, and Bandura’s (2000) arguments about collective versus self efficacy.

based organizations in creating group identities and mobilizing political participation. Past research has argued that participant-based organizations such as labor unions (Ahlquist, Clayton and Levi, 2014), neighborhood and civic associations (Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti, 1994; Andrews et al., 2010; Boulding and Holzner, 2021), indigenous organizations (Poertner, 2021, 2024), solidary groups (Tsai, 2007*a*), and women’s groups (Prillaman, 2023*a,b*) play critical roles in mobilizing political participation. For example, Prillaman (2023*a*) argues that membership in women-only credit groups in India increases non-electoral political participation by expanding women’s non-family networks and building civic skills. Nevertheless, it has been difficult in observational research to establish whether these organizations are directly causing political participation to increase, and to identify the mechanisms through which that causal effect might operate. This research contributes to the study of participant-based organizations by providing credible evidence of the causal effects of an intervention designed to activate group-based social-psychological changes theorized to increase political participation.

Additionally, this study draws upon and contributes to the large literature studying interventions to increase political participation and elite responsiveness. Responsiveness is defined as whether or not a bureaucrat or politician acted to implement the desired goal of citizens after receiving a signal, either directly (i.e., through phone calls or mail) or indirectly (i.e., when citizens voice support for a party manifesto or local project) (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999). Political scientists have studied responsiveness in two separate but linked research agendas, involving the provision of a signal and the policy response to it. The first research program has sought to test whether citizens can be influenced to signal their preferences to politicians after being treated with information about the quality of services or governance in their communities. A preponderance of studies, including Metaketa I, have found that bottom-up provision of information to citizens does not alter their political behavior enough to create clear signals of their preferences (Lieberman, Posner and Tsai, 2014; Dunning et al., 2019; Adida et al., 2020; Arkedis et al., 2021). The second research program focuses on directly giving public officials information about citizens’ policy concerns through scorecards or indices. This research program also has mixed results, but has uncovered evidence of responsiveness in many contexts (Meng, Pan and Yang, 2017; Malesky, Todd and Tran, 2023), especially when the information is given to bureaucrats (Grossman, Michelitch and Prato, 2024) and enhanced by guidance on how to read and interpret scores (Dulay and

Malesky, 2023).⁷ This study connects these two research streams by testing whether improving the quality of citizen participation can sharpen the policy signal to elites and potentially increase responsiveness.

Finally, this project highlights the value of coordinated research across multiple contexts. Bodies of evidence typically develop over many years or even decades, often after a first study showing large positive results inspires replication efforts, which often find smaller effects than the original.⁸ These evidence waves can create the impression that a first study was a false positive, or conversely, make it harder to publish subsequent studies with null results. In our case, the coordinated multi-site design clarifies that this knowledge generation process discounts the high degree of heterogeneity across cases. The dramatic variation in the effectiveness of the women’s group empowerment treatment across sites was not anticipated by a group of experts whom we surveyed to capture their prior beliefs about the likely results. While expert forecasters from academia and policy nearly uniformly predicted positive effects of the intervention, a strong majority also predicted that the results would have less variation across cases than actually observed in our experiments (see Appendix I). Overall, the coordinated research design allows us to identify that this women’s group empowerment intervention can increase non-electoral participation, and also to characterize a distribution of potential effects.

2 Theory

2.1 Conceptualizing Group-Based Political Participation

The primary outcomes of interest in this study are the level and quality of women’s non-electoral political participation. We follow Verba and Nie (1987, p. 22) in defining political participation as “acts aimed at influencing the government either by affecting the choice of government personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel.” Political participation includes voting in elections and contributing to campaigns, but also includes non-electoral activities such as contacting officials, signing petitions, attending town council meetings, seeking support for community

⁷See Dulay and Malesky (2023) Appendix Table A1 for a more comprehensive list of scorecard studies.

⁸The studies of community-based monitoring of local service delivery, starting with Björkman and Svensson (2009) and much-later replication efforts by Christensen et al. (2021) and Raffler, Posner and Parkerson (2020), is a prime example.

projects, and donating to or participating in interest groups, advocacy organizations, or political parties.⁹

The five field experiments in this study took place in countries that combine aspects of democratic and authoritarian institutions, and where elections are generally not an effective channel for policy influence or accountability. We focus on non-electoral forms of participation at the local level because we theorize that citizens can still induce policy responsiveness at the local level in the absence of electoral accountability.¹⁰ Local governments control policies that are important for development outcomes, such as water and sanitation, road maintenance, and some health and education services (World Bank, 2003; Faguet, 2014). In addition, there is increasing evidence that local governments or localized bureaucrats can be responsive to some citizen demands even absent a strong electoral accountability mechanism (Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler, 2014; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2011; Malesky, Nguyen and Tran, 2014; Sujarwoto, 2012; Deininger and Mpuga, 2005; Tsai, 2007*a,b*). The level of non-electoral political participation through a range of relevant local channels is the first outcome of interest in this study.

When political participation is undertaken not to advance personal interests but the welfare of a broader group, it is a form of collective action. Social psychologists define collective action as “any action undertaken by an individual as a representative of the group and aimed at improving the conditions of the group as a whole” (van Zomeren, Spears and Leach, 2008).¹¹ Each team’s group empowerment intervention aimed to increase political participation by and on behalf of a broader group because this form of political participation is believed to increase the government’s provision of programmatic, collective benefits (Kitschelt, 2000).

Collective action involves identifying and building support for a set of shared demands and coordinating around the articulation of those demands. Therefore, to the extent that we see an increase in the degree to which women coordinate around a set of shared priorities, we expect that

⁹Note that some studies include contentious politics like protest, strikes, and direct action as forms of non-electoral political participation, though their inclusion is inconsistent. We did not intend to induce those forms of participation in the study sites for practical and ethical reasons.

¹⁰Our conceptualization of “local” includes nearby offices of national government agencies, traditional leaders, and regional governments. What it excludes is national electoral competitions such as presidential or legislative elections.

¹¹In political science, the concept of collective action is most famously associated with discussion of group efforts to directly supply public goods and protect common pool resources (Olson, 1971; Ostrom, 2007; Hardin, 1968), but it has also been used to conceptualize individual participation in protests and social movements that are trying to bring about a general policy change (Lichbach, 1998; Aytaç and Stokes, 2019; King, Pan and Roberts, 2013). Our conceptualization is closer to this second body of work.

they are more likely to influence local policies and service delivery. We theorize that participation is also more likely to be effective in getting what the participant wants when it is clear, relevant, and sincere. Participation is clear when the problem and desired solution are apparent. Participation is relevant when the participant is asking for something that their target has the power to act upon. Finally, participation is sincere when it is in pursuit of a true priority.¹² These attributes of participation quality comprise our second outcome of interest in the analysis.

We understand uncoerced political participation to be normatively important in its own right as a form of agency. The term group empowerment refers to activities aimed at increasing groups' ability and willingness to "make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer, 1999, 2005, 437). This conceptualization builds upon prior research focused on the empowerment of members of marginalized groups, including subaltern ethnic or class-based groups (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Gay, 2001; Poertner, 2023). Group empowerment is particularly important in hybrid regime settings where participation routinely involves coercion (Mares and Young, 2019).

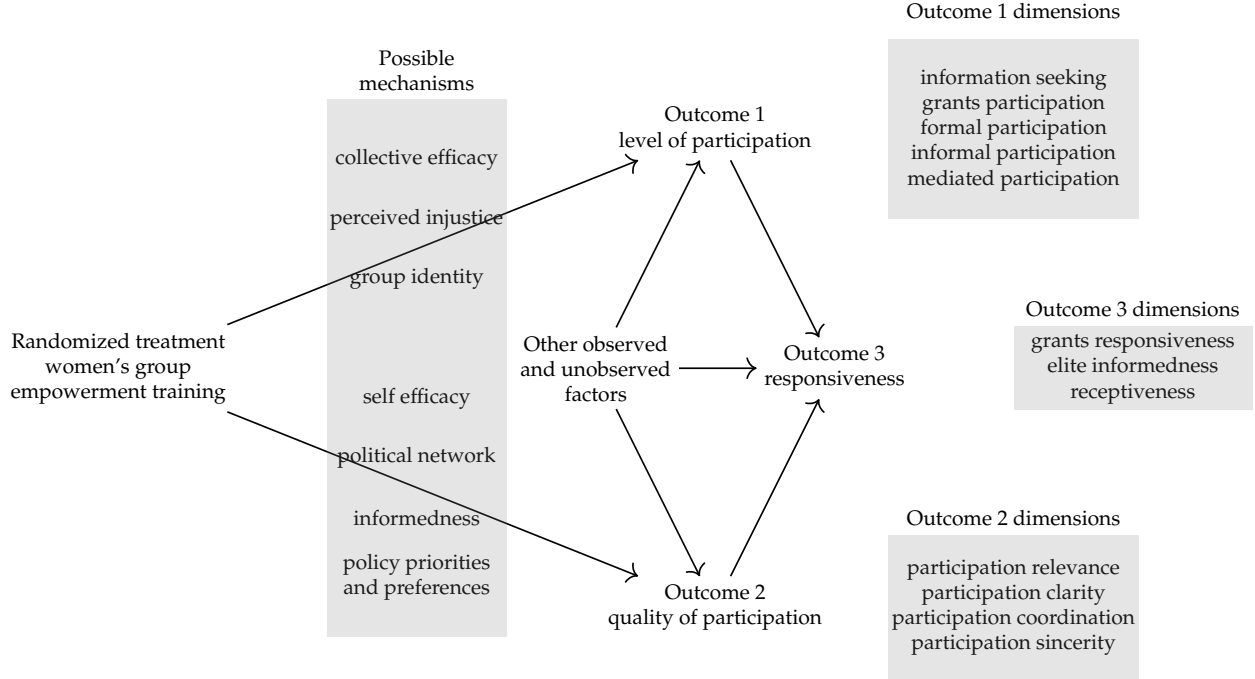
Political participation can also impact whether politicians and bureaucrats are responsive to citizens, which is important, as it determines whether and which citizens obtain the goods and services that they need from the state. We conceptualize policy responsiveness as the extent to which local government actions align with the stated priorities of women constituents, particularly after receiving a clear signal of those priorities (Pennock, 1952; Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999).¹³ We view receptiveness, defined as openness to receiving constituent signals (Meng, Pan and Yang, 2017), and dialogic responsiveness, defined as the state verbally recognizing citizen demands (Parthasarathy, Rao and Palaniswamy, 2019), as precursors to responsiveness in that they capture awareness of citizen preferences and willingness to engage them. Elite responsiveness to women's political participation is our third outcome of interest.

Our core theoretical predictions are outlined with a directed acyclic graph (DAG) in Figure 1. The figure details how we expected the women's empowerment training to increase women's non-

¹²Sincerity can be defined at the individual or group level and has previously been studied primarily at the individual level (Khan, 2021). In this study, we conceptualize sincerity as pursuing one of the top priorities of the women's group.

¹³There are many dimensions along which responsiveness might occur. For instance, it could be the alignment of government action across sectors (such as spending on road maintenance versus maternal health) or the distribution of government action within a sector across locations (installing a latrine near a gathering place more convenient for women's use), among others.

Figure 1: DAG representation of the main theoretical claims



electoral political participation. In short, we theorized that the treatment would affect three main outcomes, and considered the potential roles of seven possible mechanisms. The DAG includes direct arrows from the treatment to outcome 1 (level of participation) and outcome 2 (quality of participation), but does not include a direct arrow to outcome 3 (responsiveness). In other words, we expect responsiveness to change as a result of the treatment, but only through changes to the level and quality of participation. The DAG does not specify the precise structure of mechanisms in terms of their causal ordering. Importantly, other unobserved factors (including perhaps electoral accountability, state capacity, and cultural and religious factors that shape women's influence) could affect all three outcomes in unknown ways, so our research design cannot estimate the direct effects of the level and quality outcomes on the responsiveness outcome; this structure nevertheless represents our theory of change.

2.2 Social-Psychological Drivers of Political Participation

Our intervention is grounded in the theoretical idea that group-based political participation can be increased by reducing key psychological barriers to participation, even without changing the

real structural barriers that women face. Therefore, the intervention materials aimed to activate multiple psychological mechanisms in a group setting.

The development of this group empowerment treatment was inspired by the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA), a social-psychological framework in which collective action is facilitated by three reinforcing psychological conditions: group identification, a sense of group-based injustice, and beliefs about collective efficacy (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2008; van Zomeren, Leach and Spears, 2010). In the strongest reading of the original SIMCA framework, the three mechanisms are postulated to be reinforcing, sequential, and jointly necessary to motivate an individual's willingness to engage in collective action (van Zomeren, 2013; Duncan, 2018; van Zomeren, Kutlaca and Turner-Zwinkels, 2018), however, we are agnostic on whether they are jointly necessary and whether order matters. Additionally, we argue that a related set of attitudinal and motivational mechanisms may also contribute to the effects of the intervention on group-based political participation, including self-efficacy, network strength, informedness, and changes in policy priorities and preferences, each of which is likely to result from group-based interventions like the one we study. Therefore, these studies are not motivated or designed to test SIMCA; rather, the studies tested a women's empowerment intervention that includes features inspired by the SIMCA framework.

Our theoretical framework also builds on earlier psychological work on the motivations for collective action, including relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1979) and stratum consciousness (Gurin, Miller and Gurin, 1980), which also focus on the link between group identity and action. While the research that initially inspired SIMCA was largely focused on protest in developed democracies, it has since been used to explain participation in social movements and protests in hybrid regimes including Lebanon and Vietnam (Nguyen, Nguyen and V. Nguyen, 2021; Tabri and Conway, 2011).¹⁴

The first psychological component of the treatment that we theorized should increase group-based political participation is group identification. Identification with a group implies caring about its status while paying a cognitive cost that increases as an individual's interest diverges

¹⁴SIMCA has also been expanded over time, with later versions adding moral conviction as a fourth component (van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears, 2012; van Zomeren, 2013; van Zomeren, Kutlaca and Turner-Zwinkels, 2018), and more recent work adding theoretical complexity and suggesting a new acronym, MOBILISE, which stands for the Model of Belonging, Individual differences, Life experience and Interaction Sustaining Engagement (Thomas et al., 2022).

from the interests of the group (Tajfel, 1978; Huddy, 2001; Shayo, 2009). However, individuals can belong to multiple groups at the same time, and overlapping categories can create new distinctions and narrower motivations for political behavior (Reingold, Haynie and Widner, 2020; Crenshaw, 2010). In our research settings, women’s group identification must overcome individual differences in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, profession, rural-urban origins, and their community’s kinship structure (Kandiyoti, 1988). Our concept of group identification is analogous to group consciousness, which has been theorized to help disenfranchised groups overcome resource constraints to engage politically (Verba and Nie, 1987; Miller et al., 1981; Conover, 1988).

The second potential driver of collective action included in the treatment is an increase in perceived injustice. Building on research on the motivating role of emotions, scholars have pointed to perceptions of injustice as a key factor motivating collective action. When an individual perceives that their group has been treated unjustly, it leads to feelings of group-based anger, a mobilizing emotion that can inspire collective action even in the face of individual costs and risks (Lerner and Tiedens, 2006; Carver and Harmon-Jones, 2009; Valentino et al., 2011; Aytaç and Stokes, 2019; Miller et al., 1981; Tausch and Becker, 2013). However, perceived injustice does not automatically follow poor or unequal treatment, as in many cases marginalized groups can defend and justify the status quo (Jost, Banaji and Nosek, 2004). One of the key roles of social activists is to make group-based grievances salient to activate group-based anger (Jasper, 2011; Young, 2023).

The third potential driver of collective action that the treatment targeted is perceived efficacy, or people’s belief in their agentic ability to select, create, and transform the environments in which they live. People’s actions are motivated and guided by their perceptions of self- and collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). As Bandura (2000, p. 75) wrote, “[p]erceived efficacy plays a key role in human functioning because it affects behavior not only directly, but by its impact on other determinants such as goals and aspirations, outcome expectations, affective proclivities, and perception of impediments and opportunities in the social environment.”

Our focus on efficacy beliefs is also inspired by seminal research in political behavior. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995)’s foundational theory of civic voluntarism posited that psychological engagement, particularly political efficacy beliefs, was one of three components necessary for political participation.¹⁵ However, while political scientists have tended to focus on individual, internal

¹⁵Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) also initially hypothesized that group consciousness would increase polit-

political efficacy beliefs, a kind of domain-specific self-efficacy (see, for example, Niemi, Craig and Mattei, 1991), we theorize that beliefs about the efficacy of the group are key to collective action. All three of these treatment components are included in the DAG as potential mechanisms.

In addition, we identify four alternative mechanisms, which are associated with but theoretically separable from the three main SIMCA psychological channels. We suggest that these are potential mechanisms through which the treatment could operate, in part, because they are difficult to separate from any intensive group-based intervention in which members engage with one another over a sustained period of time. Encouraging women to get together and facilitating intensive discussions also changes who they interact with and the type of information they share, which may affect information beyond the passive information acquisition of the placebo. We separate these alternative channels in Figure 1 to clarify that the first three SIMCA mechanisms are specific to the theory that guided the intervention design, whereas the remaining four mechanisms should be measured alongside all intensive group-based facilitated interventions to appropriately assess their relative contribution to outcomes.

The first alternative mechanism is self-efficacy, which supplements the conceptualization of collective efficacy as it is closely related but conceptually distinct. Self-efficacy is a set of beliefs held by individuals about their own agency, while collective efficacy is a set of beliefs held by individuals about the efficacy of a group to which they belong. Bandura theorized that individuals' assessments of their own influence can be increased by group participation, while perceptions of collective efficacy can be augmented or weakened by how individual team members evaluate each other (Bandura, 1977, 2001). Efforts to increase collective efficacy, therefore, should also increase self-efficacy beliefs that may increase women's individual willingness to participate on their own, apart from their beliefs that other women can work together in their locality. These beliefs about one's worth and ability, what Chang et al. (2020) call "power within," are also valuable in their own right as indicators of agency and subjective well-being.

Second, the treatment could affect the composition and density of participants' political discussion networks, by changing the type and number of women with whom the subjects regularly interact (Prillaman, 2017; Campbell, 2013). Network ties should also increase as groups engage in

ical participation. However, they later excluded it from their model after finding little empirical support for that hypothesis, musing that it may have been incorrectly measured (see p. 388 (fn 13)).

politics together in a way that is self-reinforcing (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001).

Third, group-based interventions could increase the type of political information women receive and their retention of that information. Our study design included a deliberate choice not to randomize the provision of information to evaluate whether group empowerment was effective above and beyond the unidirectional provision of information in the placebo. Thus, both treatment and control communities received the same procedural information as part of the enrollment meetings. However, to the extent that group discussions reinforced understanding, retention, and use of that information, it may have induced a separate effect on participation (Iversen and Rosenbluth, 2006).

Fourth, the group empowerment intervention should also result in changes in women’s reported policy priorities and preferences (Gottlieb, Grossman and Robinson, 2018) by exposing them to new ideas regarding redistribution, social services, and governance (Klor and Shayo, 2010; Shayo, 2009). It is possible that the intervention increased the degree to which women shared policy priorities by facilitating discussion of important issues and experiences within the group.

While we measured these alternative pathways, we are agnostic on whether these mediators are jointly necessary as well as their causal relationship with the three SIMCA mechanisms. Therefore, the possible mechanisms in Figure 1 are presented without arrows to indicate their causal ordering. Table 1 summarizes our pre-registered expectations.

2.3 The Moderating Role of Structural Constraints

Women, especially in low-income settings, face severe structural restrictions on their political participation, including regressive gender norms, limited economic resources, and a lack of information on how to participate in politics. Structural barriers to women’s political participation are contextual conditions that might moderate the effect of the group empowerment treatment. The studies focus on two barriers (measured via women’s perceptions) to women’s political participation that are relevant across many contexts: restrictive gender norms and the degree of restrictions on political freedoms (H3a and H3b in Table 1).

Restrictive gender norms about what kind of political action is appropriate or safe for women to take create tangible barriers to women’s action. Restrictive gender norms create social costs imposed by family members or broader community members. A recent systematic review of women’s empowerment interventions concluded that restrictive gender norms may have reduced the effec-

Table 1: Hypotheses

Number	Theoretical prediction
1a	ATE on level of participation >0
1b	ATE on quality of participation >0
1c	ATE on policy responsiveness >0
2a	ATE on perceived injustice >0
2b	ATE on group identity >0
2c	ATE on collective efficacy >0
2d	ATE on network size and composition >0
2e	ATE on policy preferences concentration >0
2f	ATE on procedural knowledge >0
2g	ATE on self-efficacy >0
3a	ATE on main outcomes low restrictive gender norms $>$ ATE on main outcomes high restrictive gender norms
3b	ATE on main outcomes high political freedoms $>$ ATE on main outcomes low political freedoms

tiveness of treatments in past studies of interventions to enhance women’s agency (Chang et al., 2020). Even if an intervention can induce women to show up to participate in politics, their participation may not be effective or substantive in places where gender norms make it costly for them to speak up (Casey, Glennerster and Miguel, 2012; van der Windt, Humphreys and Sanchez de la Sierra, 2018; Blair and Mvukiyehe, 2025; Gazeaud et al., 2024).

Restrictions on political freedoms are another barrier to women’s political participation that might moderate the effectiveness of the group empowerment treatment. In some political contexts, criticizing the government, even on local public service delivery, can carry economic or physical costs. When a political system is less democratic, we expect that the effects of the group empowerment treatment on all three outcomes of interest —level of participation, quality of participation, and responsiveness—may be smaller.

3 Design

This section describes our research design in four steps. First, we describe the selection of locations and experimental assignment rules. Next, we discuss the women’s empowerment training courses delivered to selected locations and the alternative placebo treatment received by the control group. Finally, we articulate our measurement strategy for the three primary outcomes of participation

level, quality, and responsiveness, and our approach to measuring mechanisms and subgroup effects.

16

3.1 Sampling

Sampling and random assignment for our project proceeded in three stages. First, we selected country-level sites. Next, within each country, research teams identified local administrative governments where it was feasible to conduct the experiment in existing or newly created women’s groups. Finally, each team randomly assigned some of the women’s groups to a treatment condition that received the full SIMCA-based women’s empowerment training alongside basic information and the others to a placebo condition that delivered only the basic informational treatment in a unidirectional, noninteractive fashion.

3.1.1 Country Selection

A central goal of the Metaketa research model is to evaluate interventions across differing study contexts rather than assuming that a study that works in one specific context should work in another. By coordinating field experimental interventions across different political and cultural contexts, the meta-analysis and the five underlying individual studies help the field to begin to accumulate knowledge about the conditions under which interventions are most likely to work, or show that common interventions don’t work as consistently as previously believed. The five study sites (Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam) in our experiment were chosen via a competitive proposal process.¹⁷ Teams were selected based on the quality of their theoretical approach, research designs, and in-country partners. In addition, the steering committee prioritized settings with highly unequal political participation between men and women, and which included multiple regions, regime types, and types of cultural norms regarding women’s empowerment. Appendix B provides detailed information on differences in the institutional context of the study sites (in Panel A) and research team approaches to recruitment, sampling, training, and partners

¹⁶Appendix J discusses our risk-benefit assessment, the design choices made to minimize backlash against participants, real-time adverse event monitoring, informed consent procedures, and an independent ethics review beyond standard IRB requirements.

¹⁷One study site, Myanmar, was replaced because the elected government was ousted in a military coup in February 2021 and conditions became too risky for the study to continue there. The same research team instead carried out the study in Nigeria with the same implementing partner.

(in Panel B).

Figure 2 places the five study countries in comparison to the rest of the world on three dimensions, as measured by the V-Dem project (Coppedge et al., 2024). On all three of these measures (freedom of domestic movement for women, property rights for women, and the fraction of lower chamber legislators who are women), our study sites rank in the bottom two-thirds of ranked countries. Within that bottom two-thirds, our study countries cover a wide range. Note that the rank order of the five countries differs across these three measures, underscoring the complexity of women’s position across these societies. This cross-national comparison suggests that our study sites are not grossly atypical on these three dimensions and therefore serve as a reasonable set from which to draw (necessarily tentative) conclusions about how our results might apply more broadly.

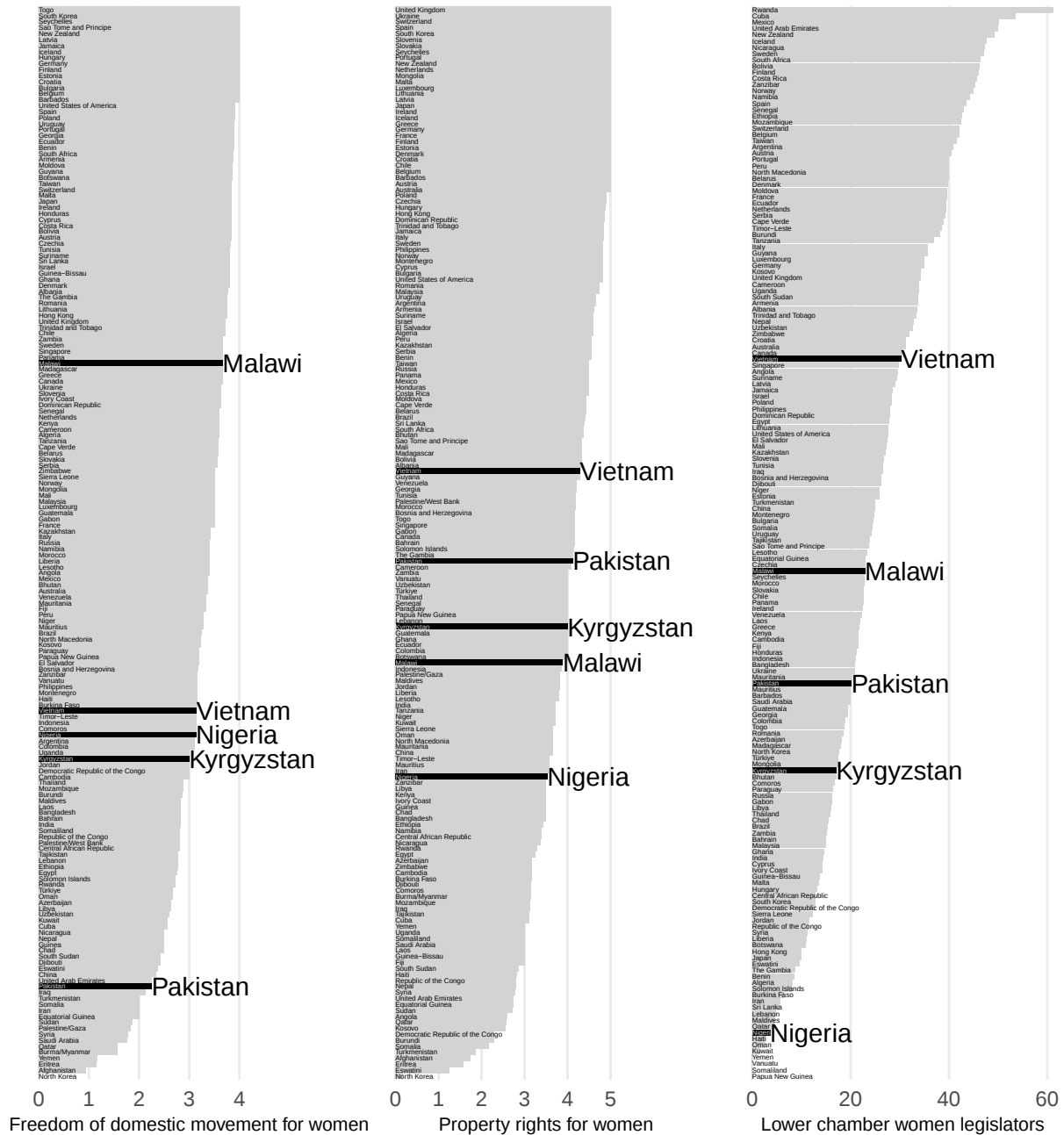
3.1.2 Selection of Localities

The sampling procedure for choosing higher-level administrative units (cities, states, provinces) within each context was nonrandom. Working with partner organizations, each country team established a set of units within which the intervention could be beneficial, and it was feasible to conduct the study. For this reason, the studies are not representative at the country level.

Within each of these higher-level units, we studied political processes involving women and political elites in specific localities. In Malawi, Vietnam, and Kyrgyzstan, localities are villages, in Nigeria they are communities within wards, and in Pakistan, localities are neighborhoods with varying levels of urban density. Treatment and placebo WGs were randomly selected from these localities within the higher-level units.

How the women’s groups were formed also differs across study countries. In two sites (Nigeria and Pakistan), the women’s groups were created as part of the experiment and were introduced into localities. Women from those localities were recruited into these new women’s groups on a nonrandom basis, with efforts made to recruit women who were not already the most politically active in the community. In other contexts, study teams recruited new members into preexisting women’s groups. In Vietnam, the intervention was run in local branches of the Women’s Union, a mass organization affiliated with the ruling party. In Malawi, the intervention was run in existing Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). In Kyrgyzstan, the intervention was implemented in existing village health committees.

Figure 2: Cross-national comparison of Metaketa V study countries to the rest of the world



Note: Each panel ranks all countries with available data on one V-Dem indicator (from 2021). Black bars are the five Metaketa V study countries; gray bars are all other countries. *Freedom of domestic movement for women* (left) measures the extent to which women can travel outside the home and acquire passports without permission from a male guardian, on a 0–4 scale from severely restricted to unrestricted. *Property rights for women* (center) measures the extent to which women enjoy the same property rights as men (inheritance, land ownership, and marital property) on a 0–4 scale. *Lower chamber women legislators* (right) is the share of seats in the lower (or unicameral) legislative chamber held by women. *Data:* V-Dem Project, v14 (Coppedge et al., 2024).

In all contexts, new women who had not already been actively engaged in the community were recruited into the women’s groups. In contexts where new women’s groups were created (Nigeria, Pakistan), all women were new recruits. In contexts where teams worked with existing groups (Vietnam, Malawi, Kyrgyzstan), a significant proportion of the groups were new women recruited into existing organizations. In the case of Vietnam, in which the existing Women’s Union groups were already very inclusive, fewer new members were added, and the study samples should be considered newly created subgroups of the existing groups. The justification for this is that a key motivation for this study was to better understand how individuals who were not already active in political life can be motivated to become more active participants, as their voices are also important for more effective responsiveness. Thus, each community consisted of both a pool of women who were already more likely to join such a group, as well as a pool of women who had not yet become active participants (latent participants), but who could be motivated to become active. We also expected that some women could not be induced to become active under any circumstances. Of women who were willing to join groups, we expected both already-active and latent participants to respond similarly to the treatment.

3.2 Treatment conditions and randomization

Treatment and placebo meetings were preceded by an enrollment meeting prior to the roll-out of the intervention, during which the experimental sample was determined. In many cases, the enrollment meetings were also used to collect basic survey measurements and contact information. Only women in attendance at the enrollment meetings are considered part of the experimental sample. On the front end, this rule excluded those who were invited to the enrollment meeting but chose not to attend or did not complete the baseline survey. On the back end, it excludes women who missed the enrollment meeting but joined the treatment or placebo groups in subsequent meetings. Some country studies deliberately measured outcomes for a subset of all women’s group participants. In those cases, a preregistered rule that was blind to treatment status was used to determine who was to be followed for measurement.¹⁸

¹⁸Such rules could include random sampling from the list of women who attended the enrollment meeting or deterministically choosing a subset based on covariate values measured at the enrollment meetings. The rule specified that teams could not use information obtained after the enrollment meetings because such procedures might differ across treatment and placebo women’s groups.

The assignment to treatment (for the coordinated intervention) occurred at the level of the women’s group, and the randomization was blocked by pre-treatment covariates that differed by study, depending on the information available in each site and teams’ expectations of which covariates would be most predictive of outcomes in their settings. The studies in Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Vietnam used matched quartet designs.¹⁹ The studies in Malawi and Nigeria blocked randomization by multiple pre-treatment covariates.²⁰

Teams aimed to administer endline surveys to everyone that they had identified as being in the experimental sample at the enrollment meeting. Members of the experimental sample who did not answer the endline survey were considered to have “attrited,” after teams made at least four attempts to survey a sampled respondent.

Table 2: Observations and Clusters across Studies

Study	Clusters	Individuals	Treatment Group				Placebo Group			
			Clusters	Individuals	Baseline	Endline	Clusters	Individuals	Baseline	Endline
Kyrgyzstan	150	1,972	75	1,027	479 (46.6%)	832 (81.0%)	75	945	459 (48.6%)	819 (86.7%)
Malawi	193	3,970	93	1,945	1,351 (69.5%)	1,362 (70.0%)	100	2,025	1,474 (72.8%)	1,496 (73.9%)
Nigeria	300	3,880	150	1,939	1,939 (100.0%)	1,823 (94.0%)	150	1,941	1,940 (99.9%)	1,811 (93.3%)
Pakistan	180	3,099	90	1,577	1,577 (100.0%)	1,515 (96.1%)	90	1,522	1,522 (100.0%)	1,441 (94.7%)
Vietnam	179	3,227	89	1,634	1,418 (86.8%)	1,385 (84.8%)	90	1,593	1,407 (88.3%)	1,295 (81.3%)

Table 2 depicts the sampling and data collection outcomes for each country. The first two columns list the total number of women’s groups (clusters) and women (individuals) as established at the enrollment meeting. The table also shows equivalent figures for the treatment and placebo groups, along with the fractions of the experimental sample that responded to the baseline and endline surveys. All five studies included substantial numbers of women’s groups, ranging from

¹⁹The study conducted in Kyrgyzstan stratified randomization within matched quartets of village-level groups (by matching groups on enrollment meeting attendance within each of the three regions, assigning an equal number of groups to treatment and control. The Pakistan study identified 45 blocks, each comprised of two neighboring Union Councils (UCs), which in turn is divided into two ward-clusters (serving as recruitment areas for the women’s groups). Within each block, two ward-level groups were assigned to treatment and two to control. Similarly, the Vietnam study constructed 45 blocks of matched quartets of similar villages by blocking on the type of enrollment meeting (part of a cross-cutting randomization), and within that on covariates collected at the enrollment meeting (ethnicity, party membership, and participation in women’s group meetings). Within each block, two village-level groups were assigned to treatment and two to control (See Appendix B (Panel B) for details).

²⁰For the Nigeria study, within each of the three states, 50 women’s groups were assigned to control, 50 to the main treatment arm, and 50 to another treatment arm that also trained partners of female participants, blocking on an extensive list of pre-treatment covariates (group size, road conditions, and the presence of an electric grid, a sewage system, mobile phone service, a borehole/tube well, a post office, a school, a police station, a health clinic, market stalls, a bank, means of transportation, public roadblocks, customs checkpoints, and private roadblocks). The Malawi study blocked randomization into treatment and control by various administrative covariates and group characteristics observed at the enrollment meeting (traditional authority, community remoteness, size of the group, degree of group activity, degree of group members’ political engagement, and matrilineal kinship).

150 (Kyrgyzstan) to 300 (Nigeria). These groups also comprised many individual women, ranging from 1,972 (Kyrgyzstan) to 3,970 (Malawi). The table also gives a sense of response rates, which range from 47.6% to 100% at baseline and 72.0% to 95.4% at endline.²¹ A main concern is whether endline response rates differ by treatment status; an analysis presented in Appendix H shows that in two sites (Kyrgyzstan and Malawi), the placebo group had higher endline response rates; in the remaining three, the treatment group had higher response rates. Nevertheless, none of the differences are statistically significant, and on average, the meta-analytic pooled estimate of the treatment-placebo difference in endline response is less than one-tenth of a percentage point.

Each team also surveyed elites from treatment and placebo communities. The identity of the elites to be surveyed was established before randomization occurred, so there was no sense in which research teams could “learn” which elites to interview as a result of either treatment or placebo activities. Selected elites were defined as offices, such that if the individual who holds a particular office changed during the course of the study, the new officeholder would be interviewed. The elites who were surveyed included those who were involved in the provision of the type of local services being discussed in the treatment groups.²² If the community grant committees were at the cluster level, surveyed elites could include at least one elite per cluster, who was involved in the community grants allocation committee (the community grants program is describe in detail in section 3.3.1).

3.2.1 Coordinated Women’s Empowerment Interventions

The interventions tested here were developed for this project but share intellectual foundations and training tools with several women’s empowerment programs operated by non-government organizations around the world. The most prominent of these endeavors is the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), which was developed in 2007 and is currently being used by Oxfam and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Mayoux, 2010), which reports training over 80,000 participants across a variety of contexts. As with GALS, our intervention aims to empower women by facilitating the psychological processes that enable women to use their political resources to pursue their priorities in local public services provision. It does this by creating or enriching local,

²¹Lower baseline response rates in Kyrgyzstan likely result from the baseline survey being conducted prior to the burn-in meeting, rather than at the meeting like other research teams.

²²Note that in Pakistan local government offices eroded during the study period, so local elites had to be remapped post-randomization.

participant-based civil society organizations that bring together groups of women and facilitating exercises that aim to break down the socio-psychological barriers to political participation.

The treatment was delivered through facilitated group meetings within the women’s groups and consisted of a series of exercises and discussions designed to activate the beliefs and identities that facilitate collective political participation as per the SIMCA framework: 1) sense of group-based injustice, 2) group identity, and 3) collective efficacy beliefs. In order to operationalize these three treatment components and to coordinate the treatment across the different settings, teams coordinated and defined a number of more specific treatment sub-components or treatment goals for each of the central components of the SIMCA model (see Table 3 for an overview). For example, to increase perceived efficacy, the intervention 1) highlighted the benefits of coordinated action, 2) provided information about local decision-making and funding processes, 3) identified points of influence, 4) trained effective communication with decision-makers, and 5) discussed locally feasible policy changes.

In each context, teams used one or more activities during the treatment group meetings to activate each of these sub-components. A ‘standardized activities menu’ maps specific proposed activities and exercises to these common treatment sub-components. Drawing on current practices of different implementing partners, such as Oxfam’s GALS program, and other best practices and in line with the theory that efficacy beliefs are most effectively induced through “mastery experiences” (Bandura, 1977),²³ these activities used discussion-based and experiential learning techniques that incorporated the personal experiences and needs of women in their specific communities. For instance, to develop group identity, respondents engaged in an activity mapping exercise, comparing the daily timelines and responsibilities of men and women, allowing participants to observe their similar gender roles. A “problem hat” activity was used to communicate shared grievances by allowing women to anonymously describe their own problems that they experience as women, and learn about those of other women. To facilitate collective efficacy, a community power mapping exercise helped participants create a spatial reflection of their localities, identifying the key individuals and sites of influence for affecting change. Table 3 gives an overview of the specific elements

²³ “Mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one’s personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established” (Bandura, 1997).

Table 3: Treatment Components and Example Activities

Target	Sub-Component	Example Activity
Sense of group-based injustice	1. Make common grievances over gender inequality salient	Problem Hat: share problems anonymously for collective discussion and solution brainstorming.
Group identity	1. Increase common identity	Activity Mapping: Use gender-colored cards to put women's and men's time in a typical day into categories (farming, care, community meetings, paid work, etc). Compare and discuss.
	2. Identify common needs and goals	Criteria Ranking Matrix/Pairwise Ranking: Write several prioritized issues on cards, or associate them with objects (ex. education = a pencil). Compare items in pairs and discuss which is the most important. Place prioritized cards/items in the matrix to identify where shared priorities lie.
Perceived efficacy (collective and self)	1. Highlight benefits of coordinated action	Sharing Success Stories: Similar women share stories of political participation (motivation, process, challenges, etc), in a face-to-face session or audio/video clip.
	2. Provide information about local decision-making and funding processes	Process Diagram: Identify the steps involved in a political participation process. Who are the decision-makers? What decisions can they make? What is the cost in terms of time and resources? Write steps on cards that can be moved around. Review diagram and brainstorm ways to improve.
	3. Identify points of influence	Power Mapping: Map out community spaces, then distribute 10 small objects to each participant to place where they feel they have the most power on the map. Count objects and reflect on where participants feel most and least powerful.
	4. Train effective communication with decision-makers	Women's Leadership Styles: Show images of women leaders, and then women from the community. Give examples of male leaders. Ask for characteristics of leaders, and reflect on differences by gender.
	5. Discuss locally feasible policy changes	Action Plan Matrix: Identify objectives and corresponding actions, indicating goals, persons in charge, and timelines.

of the three treatment components, along with examples of the types of activities used.²⁴

In planning the studies, we were concerned that many women would be met with non-responsive political elites when they tried to participate (Arkedis et al., 2021). Therefore, in order for the intervention to plausibly increase political participation in a sustainable way, it needed to anticipate this likely response and give women the skills and motivation to persist. To this end, the training activities included opportunities to practice the relevant skills in a realistic environment. These included role play, where reactions to common challenges were practiced, and coaching around early attempts at real non-electoral participation.

To better isolate the effect of the psycho-social components of the treatment and ensure that observed increases in women’s participation were not just an artifact of information provided on the political process and points of potential influence, we chose to also provide local political information in the placebo condition. However, the placebo condition provided information on service delivery and political participation only in a *non-interactive and unidirectional* manner and *did not* directly target gender identity or collective efficacy beliefs. Consequently, the comparison placebo helps partial out the effect of the informational resources that women receive in the treatment meetings as part of the intervention. This placebo also resembled the types of information interventions discussed above that are typically used to encourage political participation (information about the political process and government performance), and therefore allows us to test whether the collective efficacy treatment has an impact on political participation above and beyond status quo practices.

In treatment clusters, women’s group members were invited to participate in a series of facilitated meetings, each of which lasted at least 2.5 hours per session over the course of three or more months.²⁵ These meetings consisted of at least one initial enrollment meeting, with three or more additional facilitated meetings to follow that focus on the concepts above.²⁶ Women’s groups assigned to the placebo only participated in the enrollment meeting and did not receive additional facilitated sessions.²⁷ At the enrollment meeting, both the treatment and placebo women’s groups

²⁴See Appendix B for more information on the specific activities used by each team.

²⁵See Appendix C for the full implementation timeline for each study site.

²⁶Meeting attendance and compliance with the treatment meetings are reported in Appendix G.

²⁷Note that in Pakistan the placebo group met twice (burn-in and dissemination of the community grants information). The Malawi groups continued meeting as part of the village savings and loan groups, though without facilitators. The groups in Vietnam could have continued meeting through the Women’s Union, and the newly formed groups in Nigeria and Pakistan could also have continued meeting, though without facilitation.

received the placebo information about political participation.

A potential weakness of our research design concerns the relationship between the treatments and our main dependent variable (the grants competition described in more detail below). If our treatments “teach to the test” in the sense of explaining exactly how treatment group subjects should apply for grants, then any effects grants competition would not obviously generalize to effects on other forms of participation. Formally, teaching to the test would be an excludability violation that would compromise the interpretation of average causal effect estimates. We offer two defenses. First, all grant-related information was delivered in exactly the same manner and volume across placebo and treatment groups. Second, the treatment content itself was not specifically about grants in any way: none of the activities or trainings described in Table 3 mention grants or grant writing.

3.3 Measurement

3.3.1 Measurement Strategies

Each team measured outcomes using three main strategies: administrative data from a community grants program, outcome surveys with the experimental sample of women, and outcome surveys with associated local elites. We pre-registered our measurement strategies on August 17, 2022, before beginning any of the interventions. In some cases we decided to deviate from our original operationalizations of some of our outcomes. We note deviations from the pre-analysis plan in Appendix P, and when possible, we present the estimate based on the original operationalization in Appendix N.

A guiding principle of our measurement strategy was that the main outcome measures should be behavioral instead of self-reported survey measures. This was challenging in a set of coordinated studies in different countries, as the institutional contexts and services that women would try to influence vary enormously. To this end, each team created a new independently administered grant competition whereby all community members in treatment and placebo communities could apply for funding to implement a local public goods project. Primary measures of our outcomes were drawn from the behavior of women and elites that we observed through the community grants program.

The community grants program was designed to mimic real political interactions in each context, so that behavior in the grants competition is a valid measure of political participation and responsiveness in a formal political setting.²⁸ First, the selection process in each country included local political elites, so that applicants understood the selection to reflect the preferences of existing political institutions. For example, in Vietnam, after proposals were created in the village meeting, village leaders selected one proposal and forwarded it to a final selection committee, while in Malawi, a higher-level district government program administered the grants. Second, the grants program was not connected to the intervention in its administration: in four cases, the grants were implemented by a separate organization (and in Kyrgyzstan, by a separate unit in the same organization), were open to applications from the general public, and were publicized separately from the collective efficacy intervention. Third, all residents in all treatment and placebo units (i.e., villages, communities, wards) were eligible to participate in the community grants competition. A wide range of local community development projects were considered, with the instructions that they must benefit the broader community (for instance, investment in an individual’s business was ineligible) and must be legal in the local context. Examples of eligible proposals include installing (or fixing and maintaining) streetlights, improvement of local market infrastructure like stalls and bins, enhancement of local transportation infrastructure (paved roads, replacement of monkey bridges), improvement of water collection processes, environmental and public health awareness campaigns, and food drives for needy families.

All community grant application processes were parallel across treatment and placebo locations. The grants were mentioned at enrollment meetings with both treatment and placebo women,²⁹ and no advertisements mentioned a special focus on women or women’s issues. The grant application window closed after the intervention ended. To avoid “teaching to the test,” each team sought to structure the community grant announcement such that it appeared to run separately from the women’s empowerment intervention, and was run by a distinct partner organization in four out of five studies. To the extent possible, the community grants award processes were set up to follow or mimic existing local decision-making processes.

²⁸This measure is motivated in part by Fearon, Humphreys and Weinstein (2015) and Grossman and Michelitch (2018).

²⁹An exception was Pakistan, which mentioned grants during the endline survey and final group meetings for both treatment and placebo.

The community grants program allows us to directly observe and evaluate individual proposals and local elites' responses to them. This enables key outcome variables of who participated, if proposals captured women's preferences, whether they communicated those preferences effectively, whether the grant was persuasive, and whether the grant was selected.

The behavioral measures from the community grants program are complemented with self-reported measures of behavior, attitudes, and beliefs from surveys of women and relevant local elites. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, the surveys were conducted after the community grant applications were due but before the results were announced.

3.3.2 Outcomes of Interest

Our first outcome of interest is the *level of political participation*, specifically women's non-electoral participation in policy processes around public service delivery at the local level. Each study captured a wide range of ways that women might try to influence public service delivery, including through submitting to the community grants program, participating in formal community meetings around budgeting or public policy, initiating informal contact with various state and political elites, and channeling influence through a delegate (or mediated participation).

Our primary measure of the level of political participation is whether a woman was a sponsor or co-signatory on a community grants proposal, as indicated by the administrative records from the grants competition.³⁰ As described in the previous subsection, we prioritized measures based on the community grants competition that capture real political behavior and were not potentially biased by the dynamics of self-reporting. The behavioral measure is complemented with an index of formal, informal, and mediated participation from the women's survey that capture a wider range of contextually relevant participation. The women's survey level of participation index is a binary measure that takes a value of 1 if a woman self-reports that she has participated in any formal, informal, or mediated political participation. These measures are described in Appendix Table E.3.

Our second outcome of interest is the *quality of political participation*. The intervention could have changed how relevant, clear, sincere, or coordinated women's political participation was. Our primary measures are based on the community grants applications, though we also measure self-

³⁰Grant sponsors are the lead applicants on a community grant. Co-signatories are additional members of the grant application teams.

reported participation quality for relevance, clarity, and coordination.³¹ We construct this index at the level of the individual, not the proposal, meaning that this index could increase either if more women submit separate proposals or if more women cosponsor the same proposal. We measure relevance and clarity of participation using assessments by independent coders blinded to treatment status on a four-point Likert scale and we count quality participation as being in the top two categories.³² We code participation as sincere if a grant was submitted in one of the top three sectors ranked by women from that community in the endline survey. To measure coordination, we code whether two or more women from the same women’s group collaborated on a joint grant submission. These measures are described in Appendix Table E.4 and E.5. The behavioral measures of quality are complemented with survey measures of the relevance, clarity, and coordination of women’s participation. Measures of relevance, clarity, and coordination are based on self-assessments of the respondent’s own formal and informal political participation. To avoid post-treatment bias, we define our outcome as the occurrence of high-quality participation, rather than as the quality conditional on participation.

Our final outcome of interest is the responsiveness of politicians to women. We are primarily interested in policy responsiveness, or whether women are getting the goods and services that they demand from local political elites. Our key measure of policy responsiveness is based on the community grants program, where local elites such as village leaders (e.g., Vietnam) or village and area development committee members (e.g., Malawi) recommended grant proposals for funding. When a woman’s proposal was funded by a committee that included local political elites, we code that decision as being responsive to the woman’s political participation. In addition to this primary behavioral measure of policy responsiveness, which was grant-specific, we captured several precursors to responsiveness as secondary outcomes in the women’s survey. These include perceptions that elites are more broadly receptive to women’s political participation, dialogic responsiveness or verbal recognition of women’s participation, and elite informedness about women’s priorities (Parthasarathy, Rao and Palaniswamy, 2019). These measures are described in Appendix Table E.6.

³¹The women’s survey did not include a self-reported measure of the sincerity of political participation due to concerns about misreporting.

³²For relevance, the binary is 1 if the evaluator rated the proposal in the top two categories (Somewhat or Very). For clarity, the binary is 1 if the sum of the three 0–3 clarity ratings is ≥ 6 , equivalent to averaging in the top two categories.

In addition to these outcomes, we measure seven potential mechanisms in the endline survey. First, we measure the three mechanisms that the intervention targeted: collective efficacy beliefs, group identification, and perceived injustice. Collective efficacy beliefs are measured using a battery of eight questions capturing beliefs about the capacity of women in the community to help each other with shared problems. We measure group identification with three questions about identity as a woman (pride, commonalities, and importance). Perceived injustice is measured with two direct questions about discrimination against and the rights of women in the community, and a set of eight questions that capture the gap in how much power women should have in the community and what they are perceived to actually have. We also measure four mechanisms that could be triggered by the group empowerment treatments: perceived self-efficacy, political discussion networks, concentration of policy preferences,³³ and political knowledge (informedness).

4 Analysis Procedures

Within each study, we estimate all effects under the “intention-to-treat” principle, comparing women or women’s groups assigned to treatment to women or women’s groups assigned to placebo. We use two estimators, the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimator using the covariate adjustment strategy described in Lin (2013) and the difference-in-means (DIM) estimator.

As preregistered, we use a different set of covariates in each study site for two main reasons: first, the covariates that are available differ by study, and second, the correlation of covariates with outcomes need not be the same across sites. The precise list of covariates used in each study is reported in Appendix F, demonstrating experimental balance by the same covariates that are used for adjustment. To the extent that the covariates are correlated with the outcomes, the covariate-adjusted estimators will achieve higher precision, so our preferred specification is the covariate-adjusted specification.³⁴ We cluster our standard errors by women’s group for analyses

³³Concentration of policy preferences is calculated using the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), capturing the relative proportion of women in a women’s group who cited one of the same two issues as a priority. The raw version of the HHI for most sites (Malawi, Nigeria, and Vietnam) has a maximum of two if all women in a community picked the same two sectors as their first or second most important. In Kyrgyzstan, women simply gave their unranked top three sectors, so in that site our HHI is calculated based on three rather than two sectors. In Pakistan, women were able to rate sectors instead of ranking them, so some women did not choose any sector as their most important, and many women chose multiple sectors as their most important. In that case, we calculate the HHI based on women who rated sectors as the most important. This measure reflects whether there was coordination of women within the group on critical issues for women in their locality.

³⁴Below we report the OLS estimates. DIM estimates are available in Appendix L.

conducted at the individual level and HC2 robust standard errors for analyses conducted at the women’s group level.

For the meta-analysis, we pool estimates of treatment effects on common DVs across studies using random-effects meta-analysis, separately for the adjusted and unadjusted estimates.

5 Results

We begin our discussion of results with the effects of the women’s empowerment treatment on sponsoring or cosponsoring a grant for a local community project. Figure 3 shows wide variation in participation in the grants program across study sites. In Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, placebo group sponsorship or cosponsorship of grants was in the single digits; placebo group participation was slightly higher in Nigeria and Malawi, and much higher in Vietnam. The treatment effects are positive and statistically significant in all five study sites. The meta-analytic average (10.9 points) is substantively large and statistically significant. The treatment effects on grant participation are clearly heterogeneous by site, with the largest effect estimated to be 23.7 percentage points (Vietnam) and the smallest significant effect estimated as 3.5 percentage points in Pakistan.

Next, we turn to our survey-based index of the level of participation,³⁵ which measures whether study participants attended a meeting, had someone attend a meeting on their behalf, or contacted a local official, as shown in Figure 3. The placebo group rates are relatively high in Vietnam (76%) and Nigeria (86%).³⁶ In Pakistan, by contrast, the placebo group rate was 37%. The women’s group empowerment training caused sizable increases in the level of participation in Nigeria and Malawi (7.1 and 10.6 points, respectively), with smaller, not statistically significant estimates in Vietnam and Pakistan, and a marginally negative effect in Kyrgyzstan.³⁷ Using the Q-test, we reject the null of effect homogeneity across sites for both outcome variables (grants participation:

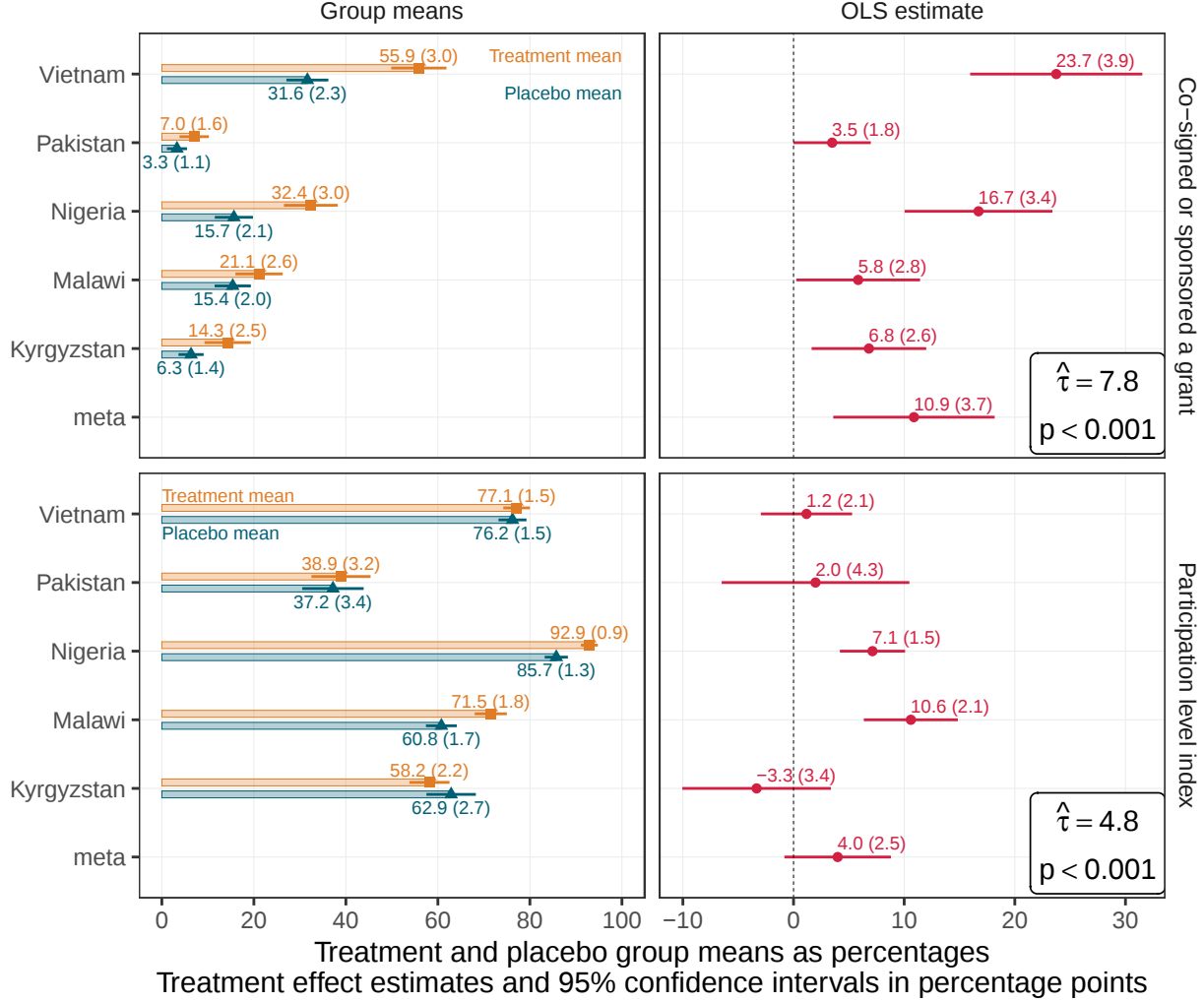
³⁵For this index and for all indices to follow, see Appendix I for estimates disaggregated by index component.

³⁶Participation rates may be high because this measure takes a value of 1 if the respondent participated in one of many different, often very local, forms of participation. It is also possible that high endline measures may capture a placebo response to the informational meeting. While we do not have a full set of comparable baseline measures of participation, formal political participation increased in the control group from baseline to endline in Nigeria (attended a meeting: 52.9% to 72.1%; spoke at a meeting: 49.5% to 68.0%) and Malawi (attended: 32.6% to 35.4%; spoke: 10.6% to 16.5%), and one common form of informal participation (contacting a councilor) increased from baseline to endline in the control group in Malawi (5.4% to 8.5%).

³⁷The binary operationalization gives a meta-analytic average of 0.04 SD ($p = 0.10$). The pre-registered continuous operationalization yields a larger, significant meta-estimate (0.151 SD, $p = 0.031$), driven by the same two sites (Malawi: 0.335 SD; Nigeria: 0.284 SD). Country-level sign and significance are identical across both operationalizations. See Figure N.34 in Appendix N

$p < 0.001$, participation level index: $p < 0.001$).

Figure 3: Group means and effect estimates on level of participation
Behavioral measure (top), survey-based index (bottom)

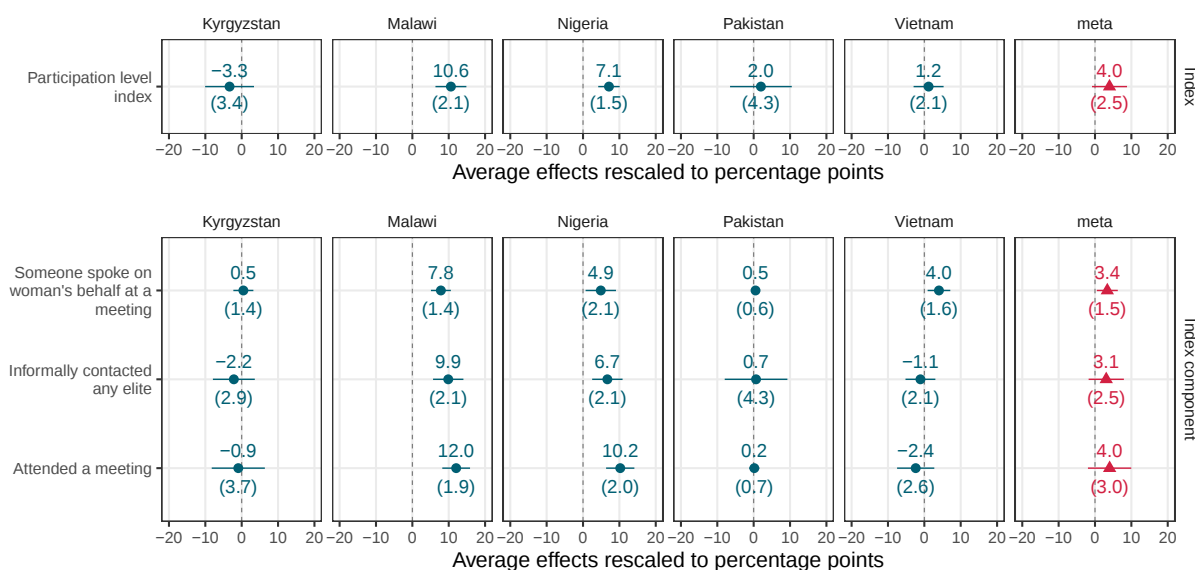


Note: OLS estimates use the Lin estimator with randomization block fixed effects; standard errors are clustered by women's group (CR2). Left panel: treatment and placebo group means as percentages. Right panel: treatment effect estimates in percentage points with 95% confidence intervals; the diamond is the random-effects meta-analytic estimate. $\hat{\tau}$ is the estimated between-study standard deviation of true effects; the Q -test p -value tests the null of effect homogeneity across studies. *Co-signed or sponsored a grant*: = 1 if the woman co-signed or sponsored at least one community grant application (behavioral measure from administrative grant records). *Participation level index*: average of standardized survey items on political participation, rescaled to [0, 100].

To demonstrate the construction of the participation index as an example of aggregate index creation, Figure 4 re-expresses the results summarized in the bottom-right facet of Figure 3 by the

overall level of participation index and its components. In Malawi and Nigeria, where results show movement on the level of participation index, the three index components also show treatment effects. In Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Vietnam, where the effects on the overall index were close to zero, the index components exhibit the same pattern, with the exception of a positive effect in Vietnam on whether someone spoke at a meeting on a woman's behalf. Equivalent figures that disaggregate results by index component are available for all measures in Appendix N.

Figure 4: Effect estimates on the survey-based index of level of participation and its component measures



Note: OLS estimates use the Lin estimator with randomization block fixed effects; standard errors are clustered by women's group (CR2). All estimates in percentage points with 95% confidence intervals (outcomes rescaled to [0, 100]); the rightmost column is the random-effects meta-analytic estimate. *Participation level index*: average of the three component measures. *Attended a formal meeting*: = 1 if the woman attended at least one government or political meeting. *Mediated formal participation*: = 1 if someone attended a community meeting and spoke on her behalf. *Informal contacts index*: = 1 if the woman contacted any of the listed elites in the last six months.

Figure 5 reports treatment effect estimates on four measures of the quality of political participation. The upper-left facet presents effect estimates on whether a subject sponsored or cosponsored a grant that was judged "relevant" by grant evaluators who were blind to treatment status. The meta effect estimate is a 10.8 percentage point improvement in the probability that a woman sponsored a grant relevant to her community. Significant effects are observed in all five countries: Vietnam (23.6 points), Nigeria (14.6 points), Malawi (8.0 points), Kyrgyzstan (7.2 points), and Pakistan

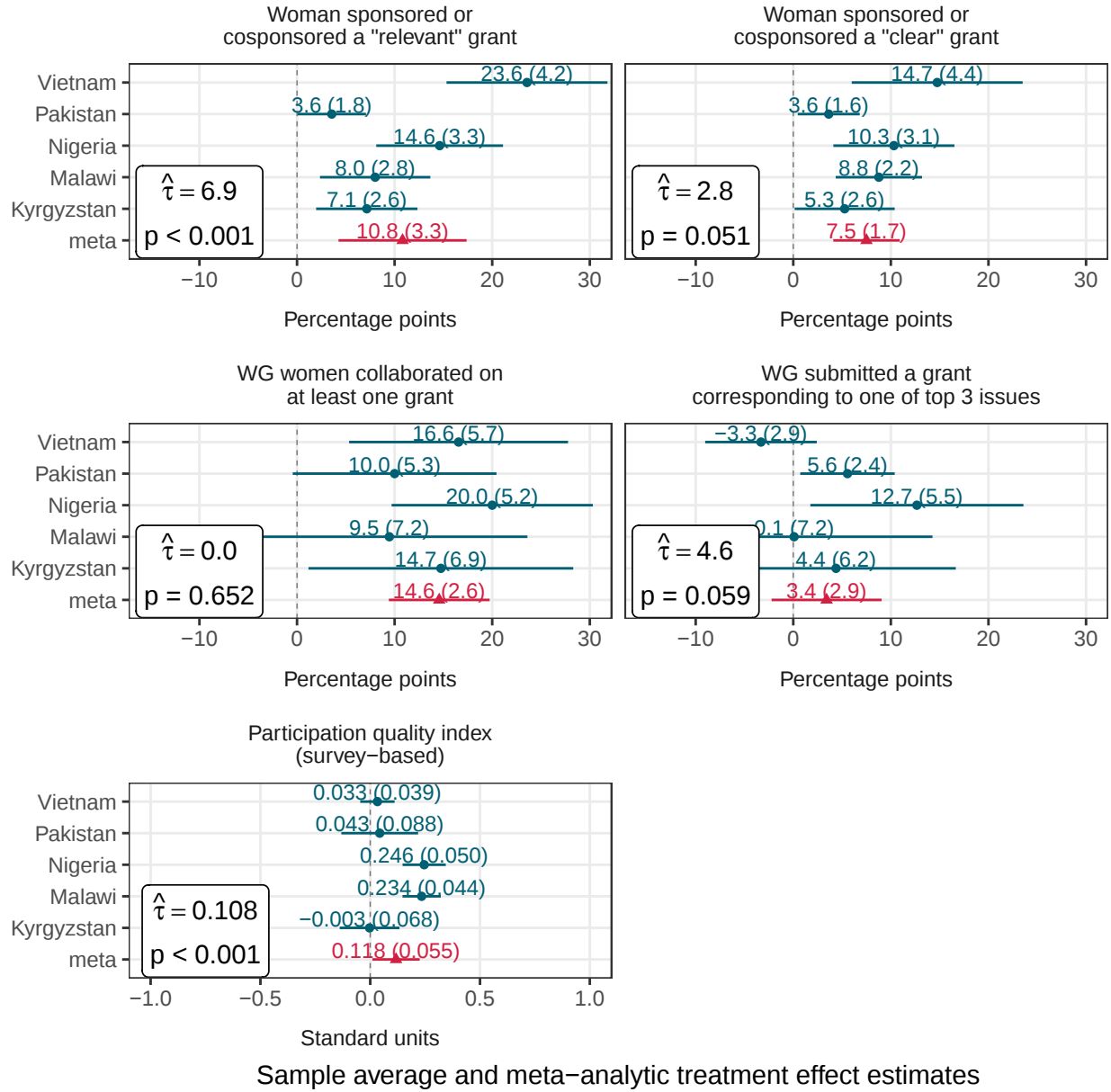
(3.6 points). The Q-test rejects the null of homogeneity across sites ($p < 0.001$). These results are very similar to the top-right facet of Figure 3 because this relevance measure of participation quality is equal to zero for any subject who did not sponsor or co-sponsor a grant. The upper-right facet depicts similar though slightly smaller effects on the number of women who sponsored or cosponsored clear grants. The center-left graph depicts effects on a binary measure of whether two or more women from the same group worked together on a joint proposal, capturing coordination within the group. In the meta-analytic average, the treated women’s groups had a 14.6 percentage point increase in women’s group collaboration compared to the placebo group women. All studies show substantively high levels of coordination, with the largest effects observed in Nigeria, where treatment led to a 20-point increase in women’s collaboration on grants. Effects are similar across contexts, and we fail to reject the null of homogeneity ($p = 0.66$). The center-right facet presents estimates on a measure of participation sincerity: whether someone from the women’s group submitted a grant corresponding to one of the top three issues listed by that same women’s group on the endline survey. Here, we do not observe a significant meta effect. Nigeria had a significant individual effect (12.7 points; $p = 0.023$); the Kyrgyzstan estimate is 4.4 points and not statistically significant ($p = 0.48$). We fail to reject the null of homogeneity across sites ($p = 0.059$).

The bottom-left facet of Figure 5 depicts effect estimates on the survey index of quality, which gives equal weight to sub-indices of participation relevance, clarity, and coordination. The treatment had positive effects in Nigeria and Malawi by over one quarter of a standard deviation, but was not large or statistically significant in the other sites. The meta-analytic estimate is 0.118 standard units and is statistically significant; the Q-test is also significant ($p < 0.001$).³⁸

Finally, Figure 6 presents our estimates of the effects of the women’s group empowerment treatment on political responsiveness to women’s participation. The left and middle facets again provide our grant-based measures that indicate whether a grant was selected for funding by a government authority. The left facet presents the treatment effects on whether individual grants submitted by women were funded. The center facet presents the group level effect of whether a grant was funded from any woman in the group. The right facet shows the survey-based measure of whether respondents believe local officials were more responsive to their policy concerns. Despite the clear increases in the level of participation, the meta-analytic effect estimates on the measures

³⁸All index components are reported in Appendix N.

Figure 5: Effects on quality of participation
Behavioral measure (top four), survey-based index (bottom left)



Note: OLS estimates use the Lin estimator with randomization block fixed effects; standard errors are clustered by women's group (CR2). Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals are shown. The diamond is the random-effects meta-analytic estimate. $\hat{\tau}$ is the estimated between-study standard deviation of true effects; the Q -test p -value tests the null of effect homogeneity across studies. Behavioral measures in percentage points (from grant records): *Grant relevance*: = 1 if a blind evaluator rated the proposal as 'Very' relevant to the call for proposals. *Grant clarity*: = 1 if the sum of evaluator ratings on writing clarity, needs documentation, and argument logic is high. *WG collaboration*: = 1 if women from the same group co-submitted at least one grant. *Grant sincerity*: = 1 if the group's grant targets one of the community's top three stated priorities. Survey measure in standard units: *Participation quality index*: average of standardized survey items on self-reported quality of political engagement.

of responsiveness are nonsignificant.³⁹ That said, there are positive effects on responsiveness in some sites on some measures: in Vietnam, treated women were 13.5 points more likely to have a grant funded. Pakistan and Nigeria had smaller but statistically significant effects on the same measure. On the survey based measure, Nigeria and Malawi both had positive and significant treatment effects. As further evidence of heterogeneity across contexts on this class of outcome, the Q-test is significant for all three outcome variables (any grant funded, WG level: $p = 0.003$; any grant funded, woman level: $p < 0.001$; responsiveness index: $p < 0.001$).⁴⁰

5.1 Mechanisms

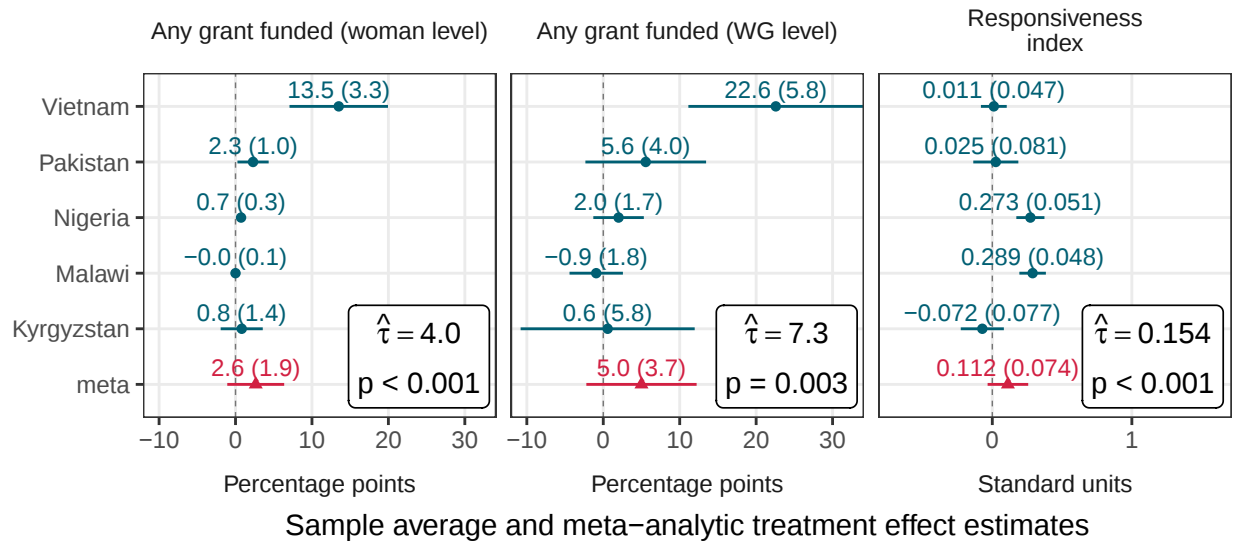
Figure 7 shows the meta-analytic average effect for the seven mechanisms outlined as hypotheses, as well as each study’s estimate. The mechanisms hypotheses outlined in Table 1 state the direction of the correlation expected in the pre-analysis plan. The results on the three mechanisms parallel to the intervention components are mixed. On collective efficacy, only the interventions in Malawi and Nigeria increased collective efficacy beliefs by large and statistically significant amounts. Perceived injustice increased by small but significant amounts in Vietnam and Malawi, driving a small (0.063 standard units) but statistically significant meta-estimate. The intervention did not increase group identification in any site (although Nigeria is close), and the meta-estimate is small and insignificant.

The four other mechanisms through which the treatment might have influenced the level and quality of political participation are indices for self-efficacy, political discussion, procedural knowledge, and policy preferences concentration. Of these, the most consistent evidence is that the treatment increased women’s perceptions of self-efficacy and concentration of policy preferences, with significant meta-analytic average estimates. Self-efficacy in the domain of political participation increased by moderate to large amounts in four out of five sites, driving a positive and significant meta-estimate of 0.139 standard units. Procedural knowledge increased in Vietnam and

³⁹The small effects on “any grant funded” at the cluster level should be understood in terms of the relative rarity of final funding decisions and the multi-step processes through which grants pass before reaching that outcome. While 20% of the clusters in Vietnam saw any grant funded, the rates were lower in the other four studies: 13% in Kyrgyzstan, 7% in Pakistan, 2% in Nigeria, and 1% in Malawi. In Nigeria, proposals require sequential endorsement from traditional community authorities (the *baale*), ward officials, and local government area (LGA) officials before funding selection; treated women were 12.5 percentage points more likely to receive any such endorsement ($p < 0.001$). In Malawi, proposals are first ranked by a village development committee (VDC) before being forwarded to an area development committee (ADC) for final selection; treated women were 3.1 percentage points more likely to have their proposal passed to the ADC ($p = 0.185$).

⁴⁰Effects of the treatment on surveyed elites are reported in Appendix O.

Figure 6: Effects on responsiveness
Behavioral measure (left and middle), and Survey-based index (right)



Note: OLS estimates use the Lin estimator with randomization block fixed effects; standard errors are clustered by women's group (CR2). Point estimates and 95% confidence intervals are shown. The diamond is the random-effects meta-analytic estimate. $\hat{\tau}$ is the estimated between-study standard deviation of true effects; the Q -test p -value tests the null of effect homogeneity across studies. *Any grant funded (WG level)*: = 1 if any grant submitted by women in the group was selected for funding (percentage points; from grant records). *Any grant funded (woman level)*: = 1 if a grant co-signed or sponsored by the study woman was selected for funding (percentage points; from grant records). *Responsiveness index*: average of standardized survey items on perceived government responsiveness to women's demands (standard units).

Malawi, and political discussion networks changed in Malawi. When we consider tests against the null of homogeneity across contexts, the Q-test is significant in four cases (Collective efficacy: $p < 0.001$, Self-efficacy: $p < 0.001$, Discussion group index: $p = 0.027$, Procedural knowledge: $p = 0.006$) and nonsignificant in three (Policy Preferences Concentration: $p = 0.156$, Perceived injustice: $p = 0.261$, and Group identification: $p = 0.504$).

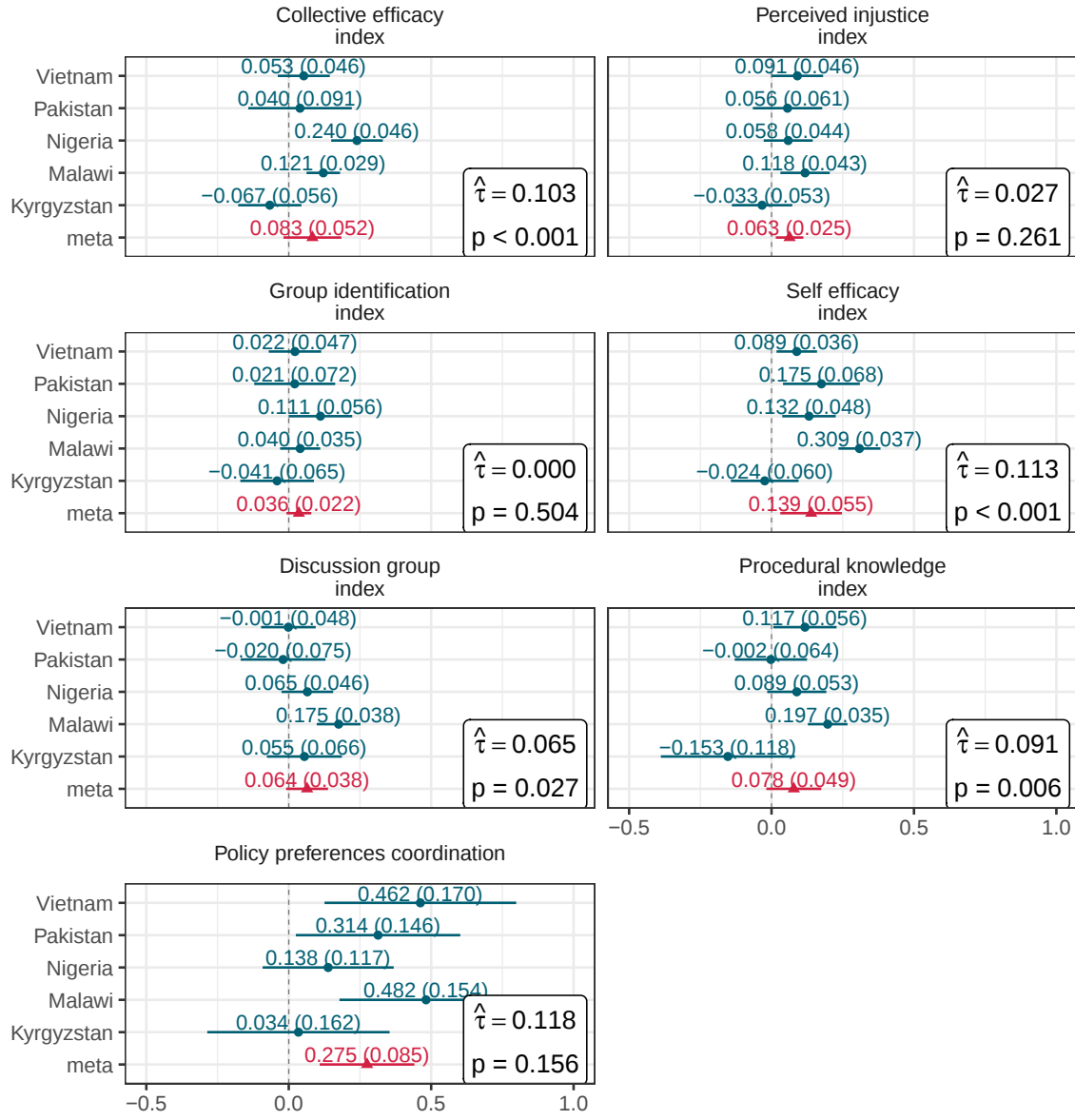
What can these estimated effects on our theorized mechanisms tell us about how the intervention worked? First, it is important to note the limitations of what our research design can tell us about mechanisms. We did not randomly assign mechanisms, so we cannot know if they are causing the observed changes in outcomes. We also do not know which component of the treatment is causing the mechanisms to move. Finally, our measures of potential mechanisms are all based on self-reports that may have more measurement error than our preferred behavioral measures.

With these strong limitations in mind, the estimates on mechanisms do support a few preliminary conclusions. First, it is clear that political participation can increase even if group identification does not. This may be because group identification among women was already sufficiently high, but it runs counter to a strict reading of the SIMCA model, though we acknowledge that much of the political participation the model was built to explain was protest behavior and contentious politics more generally, which may operate differently from what we study here. Second, while collective efficacy increased in the sites where the intervention caused the largest increases in political participation (Malawi and Nigeria), self-efficacy increased in almost all sites. These increases are in line with Bandura’s view of self and collective efficacy as mutually reinforcing, but raises questions about why beliefs about the self were generally more often responsive to the intervention than beliefs about the group.⁴¹ Finally, the effects on mechanisms that are inherent in group-based interventions like discussion networks, procedural knowledge, and policy preferences concentration highlight the potential of psychological empowerment interventions to affect these potential drivers of political participation – and the difficulty of identifying the impact of particular psychological mechanisms.⁴²

⁴¹This is consistent with the findings from Hyde, Lamb and Samet (2023)

⁴²Possible unintended consequences of the intervention are examined in Appendix K.

Figure 7: Effects on mechanism indices (survey-based)



Sample average and meta-analytic treatment effect estimate in standard units

Note: All mechanisms are estimated at the individual level except for *Policy Preferences Concentration*. OLS estimates use the Lin estimator with randomization block fixed effects; standard errors are clustered by women's group (CR2). All outcomes are survey-based standardized indices in standard units with 95% confidence intervals; the x -axis range is common across all panels. The diamond is the random-effects meta-analytic estimate. $\hat{\tau}$ is the estimated between-study standard deviation of true effects; the Q -test p -value tests the null of effect homogeneity across studies. *Collective efficacy*: perceived ability of the group to solve community problems together. *Perceived injustice*: perception that women's political exclusion is unfair. *Group identification*: sense of shared identity with women as a political group. *Self-efficacy*: confidence in one's own ability to participate in politics effectively. *Discussion*: frequency and depth of political discussion in the group. *Procedural knowledge*: knowledge of who is responsible for local services and how to contact local authorities. *Policy preference concentration*: degree of concentration of policy priorities within the group.

6 Conclusion

This study coordinated randomized evaluations of a women’s group-based empowerment treatment in Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam. The intervention itself was inspired by a particular theory of how to increase non-electoral forms of political participation among marginalized groups — the Social Identity Model of Collective Action. We built on the SIMCA model to design contextually-appropriate interventions in each of the five cases and measured outcomes in a standardized way. The main virtues of our design include the random assignment of women’s groups to placebo or control and the repetition of harmonized trials across five sites, which allow for unbiased estimation of treatment effects and direct assessment of generalizability. We also view a major contribution of our study to be moving the tests inspired by SIMCA out of the lab and into the field in varied contexts where non-electoral political participation has the potential to improve the delivery of public services.

We learned from these studies that a collective empowerment intervention can indeed increase the level of non-electoral political participation. The treatment increased our main behavioral measure, capturing whether a woman sponsored or cosponsored a community grant application, in all five sites with an overall estimate of 10.9 percentage points. It also increased the self-reported measure, an index of attendance at community meetings and informal contact with elites, in two of five sites. When we consider the mechanisms through which the treatment may have affected outcomes, we see movement in the meta-analytic average on perceived injustice, self-efficacy, and policy preferences concentration, but not on collective efficacy, group identification, or the composition of the political discussion groups. Procedural knowledge increased in two of five sites, though the meta-analytic average is not statistically significant. The precise pattern of mechanism results varies from site to site, with typically stronger effects on all putative mechanisms in Nigeria and Malawi, the two sites with the strongest effects on the participation index. In short, we learned from this study that empowerment interventions clearly can increase some of the psychological characteristics that we theorized enable political participation and can increase non-electoral political participation.

The implications of this study for politics in general are twofold. First, it is a widely shared idea that at least part of the explanation for the relatively lower levels of participation among some

marginalized groups has to do with structural constraints, such as lower financial resources, less access to relevant information, and societal pressures against women’s political participation. Our study shows that even in the clear presence of such institutionalized constraints faced by women, it is possible to increase women’s non-electoral political participation with a socio-psychological group empowerment intervention. Second, our intervention appears to have helped women to coalesce around shared goals in order to increase their level of political participation. We show that overcoming psychological barriers to collective action with a treatment aimed at group empowerment can lead to increases in political action and responsiveness.

Our study also has implications for theory. A strict reading of the SIMCA model, for example as outlined by van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (2008) and van Zomeren, Kutlaca and Turner-Zwinkels (2018), would require all of the three core mechanisms – collective efficacy, perceived injustice, and group identity – to move in order for participation to increase. We find, however, clear movement on political participation despite mixed effects on collective efficacy and null effects on group identification. Our results, therefore, are not in line with this strict (and perhaps overly literal) reading of SIMCA mechanisms as jointly necessary, but are consistent with the Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) dubiousness about the importance of group consciousness in their canonical study of participation.

A more generous reading of the body of SIMCA theory suggests that all three mechanisms may not need not move simultaneously. Perhaps some interventions that happen to move some mechanisms but not all nevertheless affect outcomes. Alternatively, it might be that the level of group identification was already sufficiently high for the theoretical channels of the SIMCA model to be operative in our study. We think our results are in line with this generous reading. Broadly speaking, our empowerment intervention successfully boosted efficacy beliefs and perceived injustice to varying degrees across measures and contexts and also affected their collective action. Finer-grained understanding of the mechanisms at play here would require research designs that independently randomize each of them.

A main goal of ex-ante harmonization across studies is to build assessments of generalizability into the research design itself. One pattern of evidence clearly did replicate across sites: there are positive effects on our main pre-registered outcome across all five sites, though the effects were of demonstrably varying magnitude. On the other outcomes, however, the evidence suggests

different patterns of results on the survey-based level of participation, quality of participation, and responsiveness. The effects on plausible mechanisms also differ by research site. Our understanding of the reasons for this evident variation is hampered by the small sample size: here we have five observations, but dozens of possible explanations having to do with national and local political contexts, sample compositions, or differences in implementation. That said, the lesson here is not that these five studies contradict each other, as we might be prone to think if they had been published sequentially. Instead, the core lesson is that effects differ across contexts, and this planned meta-analysis allows us to characterize their distributions.

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