

TITLE: Citizen Participation and Local Government Effectiveness: Evidence from Uganda

AUTHOR: Maria Camila Morales

FACULTY SPONSOR: Paul Kagundu, Ph.D., Clinical Assistant Professor, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies.

INTRODUCTION: This paper investigates the determinants of citizen participation in community affairs and the role of citizen participation in the effectiveness of local government in decentralized systems of government. We have formulated two specific research questions: (1) What determines citizen participation? (2) Does citizen participation affect actual performance of local governments? For the second research question we focus on three distinct areas: local financial management, public health, and primary education. This research study aims to quantify and explain the hypothesis that decentralization and greater citizen participation improve local governments' management and service delivery.

METHOD: This study uses individual level data collected from the Round 4 Afrobarometer Survey, which consists of a nationally representative sample of 2,431 Ugandan adults. General demographic data and measures of government effectiveness were gathered from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics and the Auditor's General Reports. We use a binomial logit model to investigate question (1), and (2) in regards to financial management efficiency. To evaluate question (2) in regards to healthcare and primary education provision, we use an Ordinary Least Squares model.

RESULTS: Our findings suggest that age has a positive effect on the probability to participate in local community affairs, but it diminishes as age increases. Males have a higher probability to participate than females, and belonging to a community or religious group increases the probability of participation significantly. In regards to citizen participation and local government effectiveness, we found that there is a negative, yet insignificant, correlation between participation and financial mismanagement. Statistically significant findings suggest that Ugandan districts with greater citizen participation have better public health coverage.

CONCLUSION: We conclude that demographical characteristics like age and gender have a strong impact on the probability to participate. Social capital variables also show the same trend. Results on health care provision demonstrate a positive and significant relation with citizen participation. However, our results do not show statistical significance on the effect of citizen participation on local financial management or primary education services. We suspect our results are insignificant because of potential endogeneity in the model.