Accountability and Inclusion in Customary Institutions: Evidence from a Village-Level Experiment in Zimbabwe[*]

Kate Baldwin,[†] Shylock Muyengwa[‡] and Eric Mvukiyehe[§]

Abstract

The problem of traditional leadership is often conceived as one of low accountability due to a single unelected leader having unchecked power within communities. Instead, we argue there are strong norms of collective deliberation in most traditional political institutions. As a result, a key constraint on inclusive decision-making and broad accountability is the composition of traditional leaders' advisers and councils. We test whether encouragement to broaden advisers to village chiefs in Zimbabwe can result in better decision-making outcomes using a field experiment in 270 villages. The field experiment included two treatment arms, one which provided village chiefs with information on laws and norms encouraging inclusive decision-making through workshops and one that additionally included a local civil society leader in the workshops. We find that including a civil society leader results in more inclusive decision-making processes and improved outcomes for the village chief's political opponents, including fairer court decisions and less partisan food aid distribution. These results have important implications for how scholars conceptualize traditional leadership and indicate the possibility for improved representation through incremental changes to traditional political institutions.

[*]We are grateful to our implementing partners in Zimbabwe for their participation in the experiment and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for providing funding through their Evaluating Democracy and Governance Effectiveness (EDGE) Initiative. We thank Sarah Elven, Srujith Lingala, Rony Rodriguez-Ramirez, MacKenzie Saunyama, Varada Shrotri and Lauren Young for excellent research assistance, Target Research for coordinating our surveys, and Ellen Lust for sharing data. We have received valued feedback from Rob Blair, Will Gochberg, Gwyneth McClendon, Kristin Michelitch, Carlo Pratt and many seminar audiences. This project was approved by the University of Florida IRB (2012-U-410).

[†]Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Yale University. Mailing address: 115 Prospect Street, P.O. Box 208301, New Haven, CT 06520. Telephone: 203-432-1736. Fax: 203-432-6196. E-mail: kate.baldwin@yale.edu. Corresponding author.

[‡]Managing Director, Centre for Impact Evaluation and Research Design. Mailing address: 15 Ridge Road Avondale Harare, Zimbabwe. Telephone: +263779970322.
E-mail: shylock.muyengwa@gmail.com

[§]Economist, Research Department, The World Bank. Mailing address: 1818 H Street NW, Washington DC 20433. Telephone: 202-458-2672. E-mail: emvukiyehe@worldbank.org

Scholars and political leaders have long viewed traditional political institutions as fundamental obstacles to ensuring the equal treatment of all citizens (Mamdani 1996; Nelson 1994; Mondlane 1969, 169). Traditional leaders have been documented as making decisions that are biased against women and out-groups (Chanock 1985; Cooper 2018). Insofar as one quarter of the population of UN member states belong to ethnic groups known to have active traditional political institutions, this is a major challenge to equality and inclusion (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019). [1]

In explaining the low accountability of traditional leadership, scholars have often conceptualized decision-making in traditional institutions as the decision of a *single* unelected leader with unchecked power. Traditional chiefs have famously been conceived as "decentralized despots" (Mamdani 1996). Scholars frequently explain unaccountable governance by traditional institutions as the result of the weak electoral accountability of the office of chief (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014; De Kadt and Larreguy 2018). Scholars with a more positive take on traditional leaders have also largely focused on variation in the attributes of individual leaders in explaining their performances (Baldwin 2016; Muriaas et al. 2019).[2]

However, this perspective misses the importance of advisory institutions and collective deliberation in most traditional political institutions. Traditional leaders rarely rule without advisory councils, and many traditional political institutions include hereditary leadership positions that have special responsibility for checking the power of chiefs.[3] The role of advisers in explaining traditional governance has been overlooked by political scientists, probably in part because traditional advisers have not been formally recognized by colonial and post-colonial administrations (Mamdani 1996). However, even without formal recognition, recent research suggests that traditional

[1]For further evidence of the continued influence of traditional chiefs and traditional institutions in diverse settings, see Bleck and Michelitch (2015) on Mali, Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler (2014) on Mexico, Goist and Kern (2018) on Uganda, Murtazashvili (2016) on Afghanistan, and Van der Windt and Voors (2020) on Sierra Leone.

[2]For important exceptions, see Magaloni, Díaz-Cayeros and Ruiz Euler (2019); and Murtazashvili (2016).

[3]These include female advisers, such as queen mothers in Ghana, and traditional advisers with joking relationships to the chief (in the anthropological sense), such as muzukuru in Zimbabwe.

councils and systems of advisers have been institutionally resilient. Baldwin and Holzinger (2019) and Magaloni, Díaz-Cayeros and Ruiz Euler (2019) show that advisory councils are widespread in traditional political institutions around the world, and that these councils typically engage in deliberation as part of the decision-making process.

As a result, in explaining how well traditional institutions reflect the interests of diverse constituents, the composition of traditional chiefs' advisers would seem critical. The literature on deliberative democracy suggests that if advisers do not adequately represent certain demographic, social or political groups within communities, then the interests of these groups will not be adequately reflected in deliberative debates and subsequent decision-making (Mansbridge 1980, Mansbridge 1999;(Mendelberg, Karpowitz and Goedert, 2014)). Most commonly, traditional political institutions are criticized for overrepresenting elderly men from politically dominant local families (Chanock 1985; Goldstein and Udry 2008).

We argue that recognizing the importance of advisory councils and other advisory relationships in traditional decision-making is an important conceptual advance in understanding how traditional political institutions operate. In addition, it suggests new avenues for improving the accountability of traditional political institutions to citizens as a whole. If advisers have real influence over traditional leaders' decision-making, then it should be possible to make decision-making processes more inclusive and decision-making outcomes more egalitarian by broadening their set of advisers.

We test the possibility of generating more inclusive governance by activating a broader group of potential advisers to traditional leaders through a field experiment in 270 rural Zimbabwean villages. In particular, we study an intervention with two treatment arms designed to encourage village chiefs to govern in an inclusive manner. In the first arm, village chiefs attended a workshop on laws and norms promoting inclusion in village governance. In the second arm, new civil society leaders, previously excluded from the traditional advisory council, also attended the workshop alongside village chiefs, which positioned them to subsequently advise on decision-making pro-

cesses.[4] We study whether these treatments result in more inclusive decision-making procedures and improved outcomes of traditional institutions through a multi-method approach, including surveys of village chiefs, community leaders and households, and qualitative research involving open-ended interviews with individuals and groups.

Our results indicate that positioning a new civil society leader to advise the village chief can generate significant improvements in decision-making. In villages in which a new civil society leader was mobilized alongside traditional leaders to attend the workshops, village-level decision-making became more open and political opponents of the village chief received better outcomes, including fairer court decisions and less partisan food aid distribution. These findings have implications both for how we conceptualize these institutions as scholars and how we engage with them as policy-makers (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014; Baldwin 2016; Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler 2014). This suggests advisers have significant influence within traditional political institutions, and incremental improvements in the decision-making of traditional leaders is possible by broadening the interests represented by traditional leaders' advisers.

Accountability and Inclusion in Customary Institutions

We are interested in the accountability of traditional political institutions, defined as institutions that make decisions governing collective life whose legitimacy is based partly on their association with the customary mode of governing a community.[5] This definition requires that traditional political institutions are associated with custom in the popular imagination, not that they are faithful reflections of historical practice (Ranger 1993). Traditional political institutions encompass a broad range of institutions, from traditional kingships, such as the Kabaka of Buganda and the Zulu King,

[4]In its focus on changing engagement within traditional political institutions, the intervention differs in strategy from many recent community-driven development experiments. For reviews, see Casey (2018) and King and Samii (2014).

[5]For similar definitions, see Logan (2013) and Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey (2016).

to village assemblies.

A significant body of research on traditional institutions highlights their weakness in guaranteeing equal rights for all citizens. For example, studies from Ghana, Senegal and Zambia show that individuals with higher customary status have higher land security in customary land tenure systems (Goldstein and Udry 2008; Honig 2017). Research from Liberia and Papua New Guinea indicates women's weaker rights under customary justice systems compared to state legal systems (Cooper 2018; Sandefur and Siddiqi 2013). Traditional political institutions have been demonstrated to be in tension with women's political participation in Afghanistan and Lesotho (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov 2013; Clayton 2014).

In explaining the failure of traditional political institutions to represent the interests of many citizens, the existing literature has focused largely on the lack of electoral democracy in the selection of chiefs (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014; Mamdani 1996; Ntsebeza 2005). In this view, traditional chiefs are able to privilege the interests of a small number of cronies because they are not popularly elected in regular competitive elections. From this perspective, there is little that can be done to reform traditional governance insofar as the introduction of open elections for the position of chiefs fundamentally alters whether the office qualifies as a traditional leadership position.

However, this perspective misses the fact that the office of chief is typically only one component of traditional political institutions. Historically, traditional leaders from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe have been expected to rule-in-council, making decisions with a group of advisers (Murtazashvili 2016; Bourdillon 1976). These councils were able to influence rulers by providing new perspectives during deliberation, and the councils were sometimes highly inclusive. For example, Comaroff and Comaroff (1997) write that sovereigns in Botswana "were expected to surround themselves with advisers to guide the everyday life of the polity, men for whose advice and actions they were held responsible ..." and "to ensure that the hierarchy of courts over which they presided did not favor the rich over the poor, royals over commoners, or men over women ..." (Comaroff and

Comaroff 1997, 131). In Kuba chiefdoms, Vansina describes the council, which included representatives of all the founding Kuba subgroups, as being more powerful than the chief (Vansina 1966, 120). More generally, Stasavage (2020) shows that deliberative councils were pervasive across the pre-modern world as a result of rulers' dependence on advisers for information in contexts of weak state capacity.

The balance of power between chiefs and councils changed significantly in the colonial period, with colonial administrators typically empowering chiefs without giving corresponding authority to their advisory councils. In Mamdani's influential account (1996), chiefs became "decentralized despots" during the colonial period. Similarly, the existing literature in political science and political economy has tended to view traditional advisory groups and other associations as being rubber stamps that are co-opted by chiefs' interests rather than having independent influence (Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson 2014).[6]

However, this perspective is inconsistent with growing empirical evidence on the continued importance of advisory councils in contemporary traditional political institutions (Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler 2014; Murtazashvili 2016). Descriptive statistics from the new TradGov Group data set, which collected information on the *contemporary* practices of more than 1400 traditional political institutions worldwide, are particularly illuminating on this point. Group-specific experts reported that the vast majority of traditional political institutions include advisory bodies to chiefs, and that decision-making in these bodies is typically consensual rather than hierarchical, with traditional leaders regularly expected to justify actions to these groups (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019). Similarly, data collected by the Program on Governance and Local Development in Malawi and Zambia indicate that the majority of village-level traditional leaders have advisory councils with whom they meet every month.[7]

[6]For empirical evidence of the large effects of facilitators on deliberative groups in non-customary settings, see Humphreys, Masters and Sandbu (2006).

[7]See appendix B for more details on how village-level traditional institutions compare in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As a result, we start from the position that advisory councils and other advisory relationships have influence on decision-making in traditional political institutions via deliberative processes. Decisions pronounced by traditional chiefs are not purely individual decisions but are the outcome of a decision-making process that involves some type of consultation, and the chiefs' preferred outcome may change as a result of discussions with advisers. Furthermore, we view the deliberative process as involving not just Bayesian updating on the part of the chief but also the possibility the chief is *persuaded* by alternative views of his advisers. As in the model of Hafer and Landa (2007), chiefs will only be persuaded by individuals to whom they invest in listening, and we argue chiefs are constrained in the extent to which they listen to individuals they do not recognize as advisers.

Thus, we reframe the problem as being *the diversity of social groups represented in the group of recognized advisers*. Some chiefs have advisory councils that represent diverse interests, and some chiefs have advisory councils that represent narrow interests; some chiefs regularly engage representatives of different social groups before making important decisions, and some do not. There are local differences in the breadth of individuals with status as advisers.

We build on the literature on deliberative democracy in hypothesizing that the diversity of chiefs' advisers have implications for both the quality of decisions rendered and the legitimacy of the decision-making process (Chambers 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Mansbridge 1980).[8] We argue that there are likely to be multiple benefits of having diverse demographic and social groups recognized as advisers.

First, we expect that more inclusive sets of advisers will produce *fairer* decisions as a result of their deliberations. The interests of social groups within a community are less likely to be ignored in deliberations when leaders from these groups are included among advisers. The importance of descriptive representation of diverse social groups has been argued to be particularly important for deliberative processes, which often proceed in ex ante unpredictable directions, giving group

[8] A third category of benefits theorized to arise from broad deliberation is "better citizens," which we set aside in this study. See Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2011).

members an advantage in communicating and informing on-going debates (Mansbridge 1980). Second, we expect a broader set of advisers to lead to *more effective problem management* as a result of their increased knowledge and information about diverse aspects of the problems to be tackled (Chambers 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 2004). Finally, we expect more inclusive sets of advisers to have benefits that extend beyond the quality of deliberation; more inclusive advisory groups are also expected to cause *increased legitimacy of traditional political systems* by making more citizens feel represented in them (Mansbridge 1980; Mansbridge 1999).

Thus, we hypothesize that the diversity of traditional leaders' advisers is critical in ensuring unbiased, effective and legitimate decision-making. In cases where traditional leaders' advisers are drawn from a small pool of customary elites, they may influence leaders to make decisions that favor them and their families. In cases where leaders consult diverse groups before rendering decisions, outcomes are likely to be fairer. We expect that the consultation of members of historically marginalized groups is likely to be especially important in ensuring inclusive decision-making and equitable outcomes insofar as these individuals are likely to both represent new interests and to have a stake in maintaining inclusive decision-making procedures.

What can be done to broaden traditional leaders' advisers to make them more representative of the communities they lead? The composition of traditional advisers reflects local histories and power dynamics. Often, chiefs inherit councilors not entirely of their choosing due to councilors' own customary and social status within communities.[9] Existing advisers have interests in defending their privileged access to the chief, and may resist the adoption of more inclusive processes.[10]

Although chiefs are constrained in their ability to listen to individuals without status as advisers, *there are possibilities for changing who is recognized as an adviser.* The ability of chiefs

[9]Many traditional political institutions distinguish between advisers who inherit their position and advisers who serve at the discretion of the chief. For example, Bemba political institutions distinguish between the hereditary tribal councilors (*the bakabilo*) and the chief's appointed councilors (*the bafilolo*). Richards (1951).

[10]For evidence on the negative effects of close relatives on chiefs' decisions in Malawi, see Carlson and Seim (2020).

to choose *some* advisers creates both challenges and opportunities, creating possibilities for the representation of women and non-indigenous groups who may not have had adequate representation historically. Many traditional political institutions also recognize a role for multiple types of consultative bodies (the chief's council, ancillary councils representing particular interests (i.e. women's councils), traditional (village) assemblies), and the extent to which the accepted process of decision-making involves the consultation of broader institutions also affects the diversity of perspectives included in deliberations.[11]

We adopt two approaches to trying to encourage chiefs to increase the diversity of interests included in decision-making processes, one which appeals to norms of broad consultation and one which also casts a local civil society leader as a new potential adviser. The first arm of our field experiment provides traditional chiefs with information and normative frames that encourage them to adopt inclusive governance practices because they are in line with historical practice and the existing legal framework. Insofar as this nudges leaders to associate broader consultation with local norms, it could plausibly result in more inclusive governance. The second arm of our field experiment also positions a local civil society leader to provide advice to the chief by including them in the workshops, thereby giving them increased information on traditional governance, privileged access to the chief and potentially new status as someone to be consulted on governance matters.[12]

The findings from our experiment have implications both for applied debates about how to reform traditional political institutions and for theoretical debates about the nature of traditional political institutions. From the perspective of scholarship that views traditional leaders as "decentralized despots," attempts to broaden traditional leaders' advisers should make little difference to decision-making processes and outcomes (Mamdani 1996). In contrast, if one views traditional decision-making as the result of more complex systems of (informal) institutions, including advisory councils, then attempts to broaden traditional leaders' advisers may be consequential if

[11]On the prevalence of different consultative bodies, see Baldwin and Holzinger (2019).

[12]We define civil society leaders and describe circumstances under which they can broaden the interests represented in traditional decision-making in the next section.

successful (Díaz-Cayeros, Magaloni and Ruiz-Euler 2014; Murtazashvili 2016). We are able to encourage village chiefs to recognize new leaders as advisers in the second arm of our experiment, generating changes in decision-making procedures and outcomes that are evidence in favor of the latter perspective.

Village-Level Traditional Institution in Zimbabwe

We study the possibility of encouraging more inclusive decision-making in traditional institutions in the context of 270 villages in Mutare District in eastern Zimbabwe. Our study villages are small communities, containing an average of 168 households. Demographically, almost all of the people in these communities identify with an ethnic group that falls within the broader Shona ethnolinguistic group (with most identifying with a particular Shona chiefdom, and others identifying with a Shona dialect).[13]

These villages are led by village chiefs (called "village heads" in this context), who oversee village courts that resolve local disputes, allocate land within the village, chair village meetings (including village assemblies), and help to broker a wide range of development programs, including food aid distribution. Village chiefs inherit their positions from within their village or chiefdom's founding family and rule for life.[14]

On many dimensions, Shona traditional political institutions were historically very inclusive, egalitarian and participatory. The chieftaincy was inherited from within the patrilineal lineage that founded the village or chiefdom, but villages tended to be mixed lineage due to easy in-migration of people from other lineages, some with matrilineal relations to the ruling lineage and some from unrelated lineages (Holleman 1969, 6). Aside from the ability to inherit the chieftaincy, individuals

[13] Because some individuals identify with language groups and some individuals identify with chiefdom groups, the villages appear quite diverse on measures of ethnic diversity that do not account for this nesting.

[14] Around one quarter of the villages in our study do not fall on customary land, but even in these villages, 90 percent of village chiefs inherit their positions from within ruling families at the village or chiefdom level.

from the ruling lineages were not particularly socioeconomically privileged.[15]

By custom, chiefs made day-to-day decisions with councils of advisers, some of whom had power by virtue of representing sub-sections of the chief's territory and some of whom were appointed by the chief, but who were also typically from diverse lineages (Holleman 1969, 20). At the village level, all family heads expected to be included in major decisions. Anthropological accounts acknowledge that some chiefs flouted these norms of broad consultation in the past, but emphasize that traditional decision-making was supposed to be inclusive (Bourdillon 1976, 123, 132).

The inclusive and participatory nature of decision-making in Shona traditional political institutions is well summarized by the descriptions of dispute resolution in Bourdillon (1976), based on research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s:

"Ideally, the chief is not so much a judge as a chairman or president of his court. When a case is being tried, any man present who feels he has anything to say on the matter has a right to express his opinions ..." (132)

"The traditionally run courts are open to all and all may speak; cases are ideally decided on a consensus of public opinion ... " (165).

Although Shona traditional political institutions were generally inclusive of all male family heads, women and unmarried men were not treated as equals, and women were not able to represent themselves in disputes. That said, there was sometimes flexibility in practices so that women and young men achieved political representation. In our study area, there is a long tradition of *headwomen*. More generally, Bourdillon notes an evolution of customary practices so that women were often given standing to represent themselves in chiefs' courts in the 1960s and 1970s (Bourdillon 1976, 71-73).

We provide a detailed history of village-level traditional political institutions over time in Zim-

[15] In fact, the chief's sister's son (or maternal aunt's son), who was not part of the ruling patrilineal lineage, customarily had a special role in expressing direct criticism of the chief. Holleman 1969, 21; Bourdillon 1976, 51.

babwe in appendix A. Traditional political institutions were challenged by guerrillas during Zimbabwe's independence war. Post-independence in 1980, the ZANU-led government tried to establish elected systems of village government. However, in most rural communities, the government proved unable to reduce the power of village-level traditional leaders (Alexander 1996, 187). The report of the Rukuni Commission on land tenure, published in 1994, concluded that village heads remained much more powerful than elected village government and continued to perform wide-ranging functions (Ncube 2011, 94). In recent decades, the government has shifted its approach toward traditional authorities, adopting a strategy of working through them. Simultaneously, this has created concerns that traditional authorities have become less inclusive and accountable in their governance (Muyengwa and Child 2017).

In contemporary Zimbabwe, councils remain an important feature of village-level traditional institutions. Almost all of the village chiefs in our study area (94 percent) have advisory councils made up of around 6 additional people.[16] Village chiefs are also expected to chair village assembly meetings, including all adult members of the village, on a regular basis, and the vast majority of them (93 percent) organize community meetings at least once in the past year.[17]

However, the village chiefs vary in how broadly representative their advisers are and how regularly they engage in consultation with their wider communities. For example, in the control villages in the study, one fifth of village chiefs did not include any women on their court, one third did not make the records of court decisions publicly available, and half of chiefs did not consult any auxiliary councils (women's councils, resource management councils) when making decisions. In addition, the inclusive ideal of customary decision-making was strained by fierce partisan divisions within Zimbabwe at the time of our study in 2012-2013 (Young 2019). The village chiefs in the

[16]The Traditional Leaders Act (1998) has created an expectation that village heads' advisory committees should be made up of 6 people. In reasserting the power of village chiefs, this act collapsed the distinction between traditional councils and six-member village development committees (VIDCOs), legally established in the 1980s, which were initially supposed to be independent of chiefs. Half of village chiefs report that their advisory councils have six or seven members (with some chiefs possibly including themselves in the total). The history of village-level governance in Zimbabwe is discussed in more detail in appendix A.

[17]We provide more background statistics on the position of village chiefs in Zimbabwe in appendix B.

area we study had diverse political affiliations, with some supporting the ruling party (ZANU-PF) and others supporting the main opposition party (MDC-T). The fiercely contested national elections in 2008 hardened partisan identities in Zimbabwe, and political affiliations were generally well-known within villages. Both ZANU-PF and MDC-T affiliated village chiefs were accused of favoritism towards citizens who shared their partisan identity (Ncube 2011; Mutopo 2014), and individuals who identified as having different political views from the village chief were less likely to view their decisions as fair in our control villages.[18]

A local church leader in one of our study villages described the lack of transparency and bias in decision-making in his village prior to our study:

"[The village chief's] way of dispute management was frightening offenders and people were afraid to bring issues to the [village chief's court]. He had advisers at the [court] but he hardly consulted them or the villagers when resolving cases. He had the ultimate decision-making powers and used political statements to intimidate people on the [court]... There were biased resolutions done on political lines."[19]

The sets of councils and assemblies overseen by village chiefs are the decision-making bodies that govern Zimbabwean villages as collectives, and they are the lowest level of traditional political institutions. Zimbabwean citizens also elect district-level and national governments, and political parties have organizations at the local level. But, in addition to these political organizations, most villages have numerous associations that we consider to be part of civil society.

We conceive of civil society as associations among citizens that are wider than family units and that are not explicitly part of government; in the context of this study, this means that they are associations that are not explicitly affiliated with either traditional institutions or political parties. As Posner notes, in developing countries, these associations often look more like service providers than watchdogs, and both types of associations can serve the purpose of building trust and bonds

[18]See evidence in appendix C.
[19]Interview with civil society leader in village 31729.

between individuals (Posner 2004). The civil society groups in our study villages are associated with churches, farming and service provision. The vast majority of adults belong to at least one of these civil society groups (86 percent in our sample), and many adults belong to multiple groups (38 percent in our sample).[20]

We are interested in the possibility of broadening traditional governance by giving civil society leaders new recognition as advisers to village chiefs. In our study villages, civil society leaders include religious leaders, farmers' group leaders, volunteer village health workers and caregiver group leaders. We argue that the inclusion of these leaders in deliberations with the village chief could broaden the social groups considered in village-level decision-making insofar as (a) these leaders are from social groups who are underrepresented among existing advisers *or* (b) these leaders' activities in the community tie their interests to social groups who are underrepresented among existing advisers. As a result, the potential of civil society leaders to broaden representation will be context specific. We consider whether civil society leaders are from underrepresented groups in our study villages in the following paragraph, and we discuss their service provision activities in appendix D.[21]

Do civil society leaders differ in their social groups from village chiefs and existing traditional advisers so that their inclusion in traditional governance could potentially broaden representation? We can make inferences about this by comparing demographic and opinion data from surveys that we conducted with village chiefs, their advisers and other civil society leaders. We describe the process of collecting the survey data in more detail in the next section on research design.[22] The data presented in Table 1 indicate the average attributes of village chiefs (column 1), their advisers (column 2) and other civil society leaders (column 3) in the villages that served as the control for

[20]On the vibrancy of civil society in Zimbabwean villages, see Barr (2004).

[21]In appendix D, we provide details on the activities in which these civil society leaders typically engage, and also show that the set of civil society leaders identified in our study villages is very similar to the set of "influential people" listed by households in rural Malawi and rural Zambia.

[22]In each village, we surveyed the village chief and then surveyed at random *either* a traditional adviser, a religious leader, a farmer's group leader, a village health worker, a caregiving group leader or a development group leader.

our study.

Table 1 shows that, on some dimensions, civil society leaders differ from traditional advisers, whose interests tend to be more closely aligned with those of the village chief. Focusing on the dimensions on which we observe notable differences, women, recent migrants and citizens who do not support the governing party are underrepresented in traditional decision-making institutions. Only 9 percent of village chiefs are women and only one third of traditional advisers are female, while two thirds of civil society leaders are female. Fully 81 percent of village chiefs' parents were living in the village when they were born, and 56 percent of their traditional advisers were also born in the village, but only 37 percent of other civil society leaders were. Almost one third of village chiefs have posters broadcasting their affiliation with the governing ZANU-PF party on their houses, as do 24 percent of their traditional advisers; in contrast, only 14 percent of other civil society leaders post such signs on their houses, suggesting they have less pro-government political positions. As one might expect, both village chiefs and their traditional advisers are strong advocates for the power of the chief's court, with about three quarters recommending an increase in the power of this institutions, while other civil society leaders express considerably less support for this idea and slightly more support for individual rights.

Table 1: Comparing Village Chiefs to Traditional Advisers and Other Civil Society Leaders

	Village Chiefs	Traditional Advisers	Civil Society Leaders
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A. Demographics, Economic Status and Partisanship			
Female VC	0.0859	0.353	0.663
	(0.281)	(0.485)	(0.475)
Age (Years)	63.51	47.59	51.73
	(15.66)	(11.66)	(14.12)
Finished Primary Education	0.717	0.941	0.853
	(0.452)	(0.239)	(0.356)
Cattle wealth (log)	1.049	0.867	0.904
	(0.717)	(0.717)	(0.712)
Born Village	0.805	0.559	0.368
	(0.398)	(0.504)	(0.485)
ZANU-PF Sign	0.315	0.235	0.137
	(0.466)	(0.431)	(0.346)
Same ethnic identity as Village Chief		0.517	0.397
		(0.509)	(0.493)
Related to Village Chief		0.618	0.537
		(0.493)	(0.501)
Panel B. Knowledge and Opinions			
Court Should Have More Power (0-1)	0.727	0.765	0.473
	(0.447)	(0.431)	(0.502)
Support for Individual Rights (1-4)	2.859	2.912	2.975
	(0.402)	(0.310)	(0.408)
Knowledge of Law (0-1)	0.661	0.716	0.693
	(0.231)	(0.199)	(0.214)

Notes: This table reports means with standard deviations below in parentheses. The means aggregate data from 128 village chiefs, 35 traditional advisers and 95 other civil society leaders in the control villages.

Together, the data in Table 1 suggest the potential value in broadening village chiefs' advisers. Existing traditional advisers fail to represent the diversity of interests and opinions that exist within village-level civil society on some dimensions. There is typically a greater breadth of interests and opinions held among other civil society leaders in these villages, presenting the possibility of

broadening representation by encouraging traditional chiefs to consult additional leaders.

Research Design

Intervention

We test the effects of nudging traditional chiefs to broaden consultation by partnering with a pair of NGOs (one international, one local) working in eastern Zimbabwe. This team implemented an intervention that included two arms designed to encourage wider consultation by village chiefs. The arms of the intervention were randomized across all villages in rural Mutare District in 2012-2013. This is a district that was deeply politically divided between ZANU-PF and opposition supporters following the contested 2008 Zimbabwean election (Human-Rights-Watch 2008).

The first arm of the intervention involved providing village chiefs with information on regulations and norms encouraging inclusiveness and transparency in their decision-making. These were communicated to selected chiefs via a series of multiple-day workshops led by the local NGO, which had significant previous experience working on similar issues with higher-level traditional leaders in Zimbabwe. The workshops emphasized the variety of local stakeholders who should be represented and consulted in various types of decision-making (including gender issues, environmental management and local conflicts) both per existing Zimbabwean law and customary practices. The content was covered over six days, divided into two three-day workshops with a gap of several months in between. All workshops were held at a conference facility in the district, with all travel and accommodation expenses covered for the invited chiefs. Fully 96 percent of the invited village chiefs attended the sessions.

The second arm of the intervention added an additional nudge to broaden consultation. In this arm, the village chief was asked to invite a local community leader, not currently included in their traditional council, to attend the training session alongside them. In this way, the second arm

of the intervention gave a new civil society leader information and augmented their relationship with the village chief in a way that was hoped to encourage village chiefs to turn to them for advice, while also ensuring that inclusive governance was a salient topic on which to provide advice. In randomizing the request that local leaders invite one new civil society leader to attend the workshop with them, this arm left village chiefs quite a bit of leeway over the process of broadening consultation, as is likely to be the case in most attempts to reform traditional institutions. In this arm, 98 percent of the village chiefs attended the sessions, and 97 percent brought an additional leader with them.

In Table 2, we compare the leader type and demographic attributes of the civil society leaders selected to attend the training (column 1) compared to the pool of leaders eligible for selection (column 2), existing traditional advisers (column 3) and households in the study village (column 4).[23] There was significant non-compliance with the instruction to bring someone who was not currently included in their traditional council; of the chiefs assigned to this arm, 71 percent complied with this instruction, with 26 percent bringing a leader who was already part of their council. Otherwise, the demographic attributes of the selected civil society leaders suggest that – on average – they were from groups who were not already well-represented in traditional decision-making; 54 percent were female and only 11 percent were from the village's ruling lineage, indicating that village chiefs were *less likely* to invite a related civil society leader than one would expect by chance. Some of the civil society leader types selected with greatest frequency – village health workers and caregiver group leaders – also tend to serve underrepresented groups within the community.[24]

Both arms of the intervention nudged traditional leaders to institute more inclusive governance within existing traditional institutions. In this way, the intervention differs from many policies and programs run by governments and development partners that instead deal with the problem of non-representative traditional institutions by building parallel structures (Beath, Christia and

[23]We measured only a few attributes of the civil society leaders who attended the workshops (with this data collected during these sessions), and so Table 2 contains fewer variables than Table 1.

[24]For further discussion of activities of different leaders, see appendix D.

Table 2: Comparing Selected and Eligible Civil Society Leaders

	(1) Selected Leaders	(2) Eligible Leaders	(3) Existing Advisers	(4) Other Adults
Traditional Adviser	0.270	0.000	1.000	
Caregiver Group Leader	0.206	0.143	0.000	
Farmer's Group Leader	0.048	0.128	0.000	
Religious Leader	0.063	0.260	0.000	
Village Health Worker	0.301	0.250	0.000	
Other Leaders	0.112	0.219	0.000	
Female	0.540	0.582	0.344	0.540
Family Member (Patrilineal)	0.111	0.287	0.287	0.252

Notes: Column 1 presents proportions from data collected from the 63 CLs who actually attended the training. Column 2 presents proportions from our random sample of 196 CLs eligible to attend the training in these villages. Column 3 presents proportions from our sample of 61 traditional advisers. Column 4 presents proportions from our household survey.

Figure 1: Design of Experiment

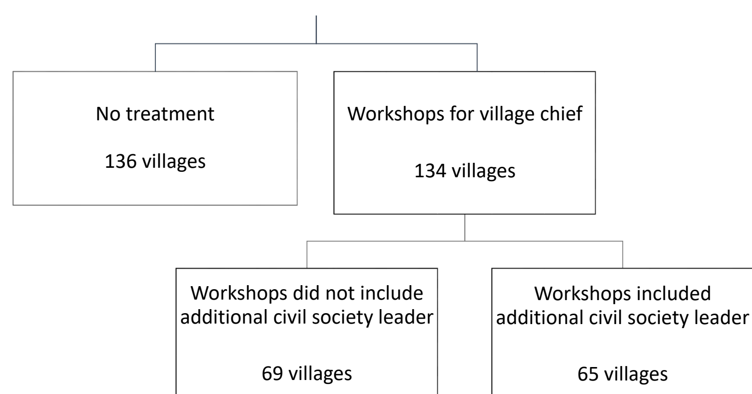
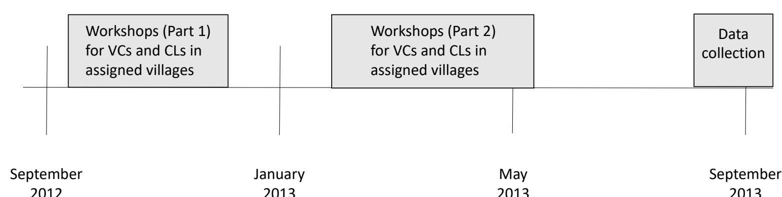


Figure 2: Project Timeline



Enikolopov 2013; Fearon et al. 2015).

Randomization into the treatment arms was done by blocks of villages, with all villages in the same ward and on the same land classification assigned to the same block. Within each of the 35 blocks, half of the villages were selected for participation in a workshop as part of the field experiment; within this group, half were assigned to the variant in which a civil society leader was also invited to the same workshops, as indicated in Figure 1. Balance statistics indicate good balance across treatment arms.[25] The workshops were held between September 2012 and May 2013, with the selected village leaders invited to a series of two three-day workshops during this time frame. Endline data collection, discussed in more detail in the next section, was conducted more than three months after the last workshop in August and September 2013.[26] The timeline for project implementation and data collection is indicated in Figure 2.

[25]These are compiled in appendix F.

[26]Following the conclusion of the endline survey in September 2013, the implementing partner subsequently held workshops for the villages who served as the treatment for the purposes of this study, making the design effectively a randomized roll-out.

Data Collection

This project involved a multifaceted data collection effort, combining quantitative and qualitative measurement and allowing triangulation of data from different sources. In August and September 2013, we conducted surveys of village chiefs, civil society leaders, and a random sample of eight households in each of the villages in the study.[27] We were able to conduct household surveys in each of the 270 villages (N=2160), to interview the village chief in 91 percent of them (N=247) and to interview a randomly selected civil society leader in 96 percent of villages (N=257).

We are interested in whether our experimental arms generated effects on decision-making processes, decision-making outcomes and the legitimacy of traditional institutions.[28] We measure inclusive decision-making processes through an index that averages information on the diversity of advisory council membership (the proportion of female advisers), the extent to which the village chief consults other village-level governance bodies (women's council, resource management committee), and the transparency of local decision-making proceedings (record availability, fees). These are measures of inclusive decision-making that were recommended in the workshops and could therefore have plausibly changed as a result of either arm of the training.[29] These were principally measured through questions posed to the village chief, but the same questions were also asked of the surveyed civil society leader to address concerns about social desirability bias.

[27]Our survey of civil society leaders includes one randomly selected civil society leader per village, selected from a list of the leaders of religious groups, farmer's groups, development groups, care groups, village health workers and senior traditional advisers living in the village; this list was determined in consultation with the village chief. We also collected basic demographic data on the civil society leaders who were invited to the training. See appendix E.

[28]Index construction, including the wording of questions included in the indices, are reported in appendix G. The analysis was pre-registered with EGAP. We indicate and justify any deviations from the pre-analysis plan in appendix L.

[29]In Table I.2 in appendix I, we show that the results are similar if we construct an alternative measure of consultation that focuses specifically on the diversity of chiefs' advisers: the proportion of women on the chief's court, the proportion of respondents not from the chief's clan (totem in Zimbabwe) on the chief's court, the chief's consultation of a women's council and the chief's consultation of a resource management committee. We do not consider the number of advisers due to the fact that the Traditional Leaders Act (1998) has created an expectation that village head's advisory committees should be made up of 6 people; villages heads who are mindful of this legal framework should rotate advisers rather than adding advisers.

We are also interested in effects on decision-making outcomes. In particular, we are interested in whether the interventions cause more impartial outcomes, more effective outcomes (in terms of problem management), and more legitimate institutions. We measure these outcomes using the household survey, focusing especially on the impartiality and effectiveness of decision-making related to food insecurity and local disputes, as these are the most important activities overseen by village heads in this region.[30]

To measure impartiality in decision-making, we consider outcomes for respondents who identify as having different political views from the village chief, as this is the most important cleavage identified within villages in our study. Specifically, we construct an impartiality index that measures the receipt of food aid and judgments of the village court's decisions by respondents who say they are not politically aligned with their village chief (28 percent of respondents).[31] To operationalize the effectiveness of problem management, we consider the extent to which food security and disputes are well-managed for households in the village. Using the full sample of respondents, we code households as having well-managed problems if they do not have a need for assistance (i.e. they have adequate food or they have no disputes) *or* if that need is met (through the receipt of food aid or adequate dispute resolution); households are coded as having unmanaged problems if they have an unmet need for assistance. Finally, we measure the legitimacy of traditional leaders through an index of four components, two of which relate to trust in the village chief (perceived trustworthiness of the village chief, perceived quality of relationship with the village chief) and two of which relate to compliance with the village chief's institutions (perceptions of other villagers' obedience to the village chief, likelihood of using the village chief's court).

One year after the completion of the quantitative surveys, we returned to 10 villages in our sample to conduct qualitative research on the mechanism through which civil society leaders influenced

[30]For justification of this claim, see Appendix B.

[31]We only have this measure for two thirds of wards due to variation in ward-level approvals of the survey instrument. This does not affect balance in the sample because we randomized within wards. We expect partisan identity to be durable throughout the study, and we provide evidence that responses to this question were not affected by the treatment for any demographic subgroup in appendix I.

village chiefs. Because our main goal for this research was to focus on the process behind our main effects, we selected 10 villages that were "good fit" cases in the sense that we estimated there was little improvement in governance if only the village chief was trained but a large improvement in governance if both the village chief and the community leader were trained (Lieberman 2005).[32] In these villages, we conducted interviews with the village chief alongside advisers of his choosing, interviews with the civil society leader included in the training sessions (or, in cases where no civil society leader had been trained, the civil society leader the village chief said he would have liked to have included), and two mixed gender focus groups with villagers. [33]

Main Experimental Results

We estimate the effects of the two arms of the experiment and the difference between them using the following equation:

$$y_{ic} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VC_c + \beta_2 CL_c + \alpha_j + \epsilon_{ic} \tag{1}$$

where VC_c is a dummy variable indicating whether the village chief is assigned to attend the workshop, CL_c is a dummy variable indicating whether a civil society leader in the village is also assigned to attend, and α_j are strata fixed effects for the strata used in the randomization lottery. Standard errors are clustered at the village level. For outcomes measured at the village level, we replace y_{ic} with y_c and ϵ_{ic} with ϵ_c. The effect of the village chief (VC) being invited to attend is β_1, the effect of the village chief and the civil society leader (VC + CL) being invited to attend is $\beta_1 + \beta_2$, and the additional effect of the civil society leader (CL) being invited is β_2.[34] We present

[32] Once we had identified all of the "good fit" cases, we selected matched villages falling within the same geographic strata but exposed to different variants of the training for inclusion in this part of the study.

[33] In each village, a random sample of adult citizens was invited to participate in the first focus group, and the village chief organized participants in the second focus group.

[34] Because this is not a fully crossed experimental design, the effect of a civil society leader is estimated contingent on a workshop being held.

our results graphically, with each graph indicating these three effects in sequence and including 95 percent confidence intervals indicated in bars around the estimates.[35]

First, we present the three estimated effects on our index of inclusive decision-making in Figure 3. The variant of the intervention in which only the village chief attends the workshops (the VC effect) is not significantly different from zero, indicating that providing information on legal and customary precedents for inclusion is not sufficient to change behavior in this context. This arm is not sufficient to encourage more inclusive decision-making in traditional political institutions, whether due to inertia on the part of the village chief or resistance from existing advisers.

In contrast, the variant of the intervention in which a civil society leader is included (the VC + CL effect) causes significantly more inclusive decision-making processes; this variant of the intervention increases the index of inclusive decision-making by more than half a standard deviation (p-value<0.01, two-tailed test). The additional effect of including a civil society leader alongside the village chief (the CL effect) is an improvement of half a standard deviation in the index of inclusive decision-making (p-value<0.05, two-tailed test). We find very similar effects when using the parallel measure of inclusive decision-making procedures constructed from the survey of civil society leaders.[36] Importantly, these results indicate that the suggestion of a new adviser subsequently made decision-making procedures more inclusive not just in the sense that this individual was consulted but on multiple dimensions of inclusiveness.[37]

We next consider whether nudges to broaden consultation also cause substantive improvements in decision-making outcomes and political legitimacy in Figure 4. We begin by considering the effects of the treatments on impartiality in decision-making. There is little effect of the village chief alone attending the workshops on the benefits that their political opponents receive. However, there is a large improvement in outcomes for these respondents when a civil society leader

[35]We present the results in tables in appendix H.

[36]Results are reported in Table I2 in appendix I.

[37]The effects on each component variable of the inclusiveness index are reported in Table I1 in appendix I.

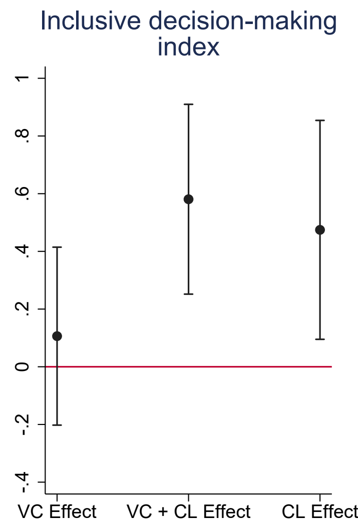


Figure 3: Treatment Effects on Village Chiefs' Decision-Making Processes. ***Bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals***

attends the workshops alongside the village chief. This causes a 13 percentage point improvement in the benefits received by the village chief's political opponents (p<0.01, two-tailed test). The additional effect of training a civil society leader alongside the village chief is a 12 percentage point improvement in the benefits received by this group (p<0.05, two-tailed test).

Next, we consider whether the arms of the experiment improved the village chief's efficacy in managing local problems, in particular food insecurity and dispute resolution. Although only the arm that includes a civil society leader has a statistically significant effect (p<0.10, two-tailed test), substantively both variants of the intervention have similar effects on problem management. The difference in the size of the effects of the two interventions on our index of problem management is very small and statistically insignificant. We discuss this issue further below, when we disaggregate our indices by distinct issue areas.

Finally, we consider the effects of the experimental arms on the village chief's legitimacy. We find that the village chief alone attending the workshop has a slight negative effect on the village chief's legitimacy, and the village chief and a civil society leader attending the workshop has a

slight positive effect on the village chief's legitimacy. As a result, the additional effect of including a civil society leader on legitimacy is positive ($p<0.10$, two-tailed test), suggesting legitimating effects relative to the condition in which only the village chief is trained.

In Figure 5, we consider the robustness of our findings on impartiality and problem management, examining the effects of the experimental arms on the distribution of benefits and management of problems by our two issue areas: food security and dispute resolution. The first column shows that the effects on impartiality are very similar across the two issue areas; whether considering the likelihood of village chiefs' political opponents receiving food aid or viewing their courts' decisions positively, there are null effects when the village chief alone attends the workshop, and there are positive effects when a civil society leader attends (p-value<0.10, two-tailed). In contrast, the second column shows the effects on problem management differ by issue area. When the village chief alone attends the workshops, this significantly improves the percentage of households whose food needs are addressed, but it has a negatively signed effect on dispute management. In contrast, when the village chief attends workshops alongside a civil society leader, this has small but consistently positive effects on both types of problem management. This suggests new advisers make a greater difference to managing disputes than to managing food security, which may be more dependent on intervillage rather than intravillage allocations.[38]

Considering these results as a whole, we find that casting a new civil society as an adviser to village chiefs can improve decision-making in traditional institutions in several ways. The inclusion of a new civil society leader makes decision-making processes more inclusive, decision-making outcomes more impartial, and management of local disputes more effective. Considering the immense challenges that policymakers have faced in trying to mitigate the influence of biased traditional leaders through the alternative strategies of bypassing or replacing them (Burr and Kyed 2007; Casey 2018), these are important findings.

[38]One possible interpretation of the results in Figure 5 is that the government reduced food aid allocation to villages with more impartial within-village allocation.

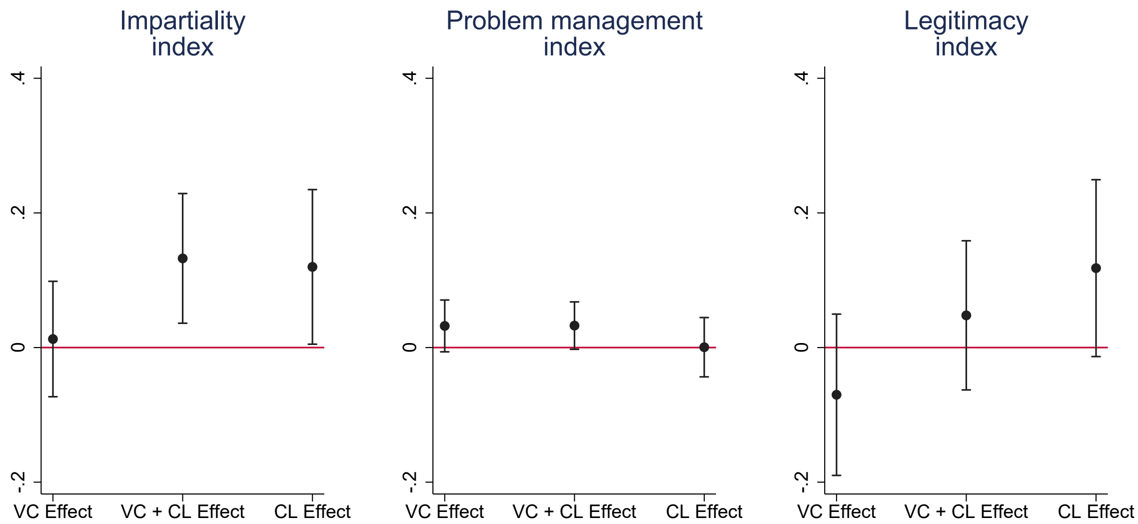


Figure 4: Treatment Effects on Village Chiefs' Decision-Making Outcomes. ***Bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals.***

Additional Evidence on Mechanism

We have hypothesized that traditional political institutions can be made more accountable to citizens by broadening the interests represented in advisory institutions and we have presented experimental results that are consistent with this theoretical perspective. Our theoretical claim is that civil society leaders gain new recognition as advisers to the village chief as a result of being invited to the workshop. In this arm of the experiment, they gain some combination of greater information about village governance, privileged access to the village chief, and new status as a potential adviser on governance issues. This makes village chiefs more likely to deliberate with them in making decisions about procedures and outcomes.

The theoretical mechanism that we propose is distinct from two plausible alternative mechanisms. We view the deliberative process we outline as distinct from village chiefs simply gaining *higher capacity* to recall and implement the inclusive procedures recommended in the workshop when two community leaders, rather than one, are trained. This alternative mechanism views the key constraint as village chiefs' capacity to recall information.

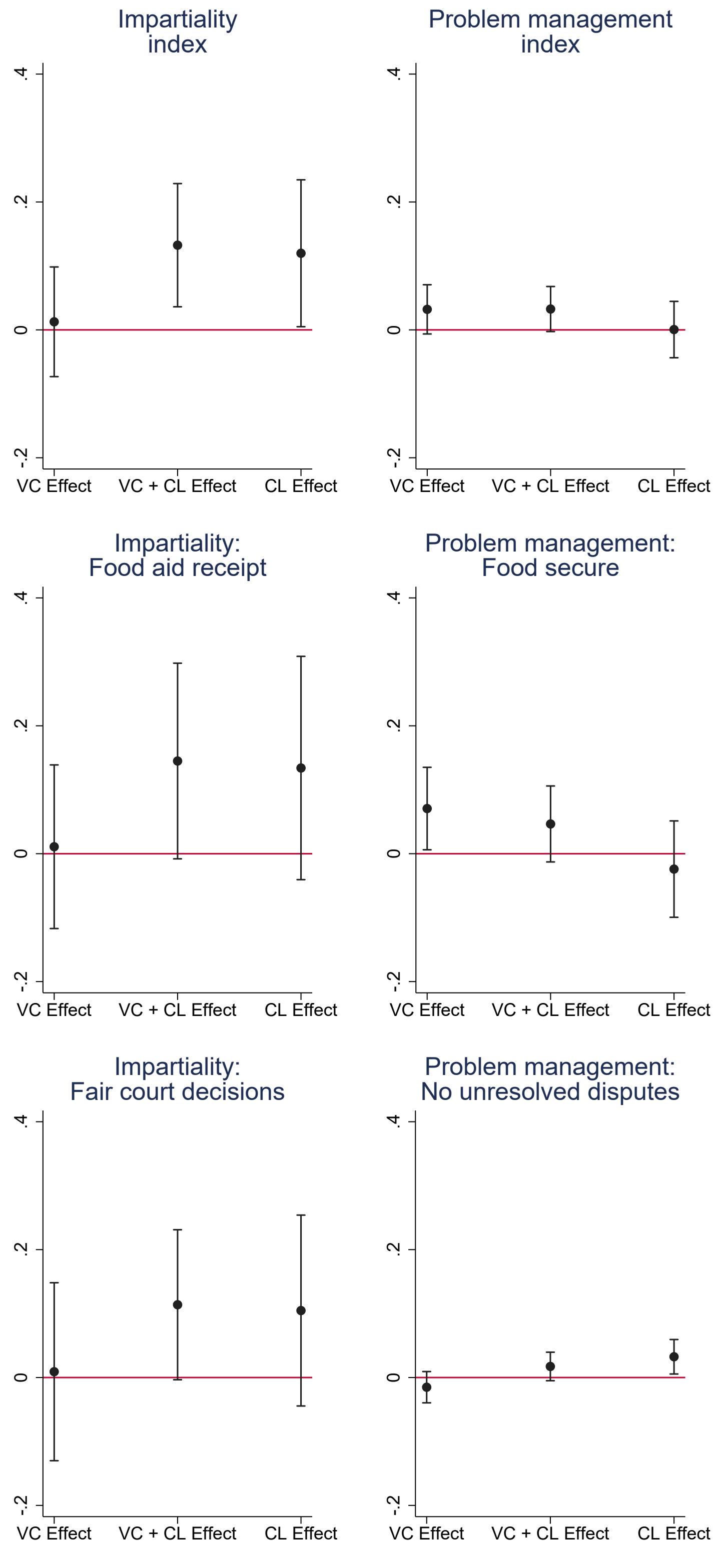


Figure 5: Treatment Effects on Village Chiefs' Decision-Making Outcomes By Issue Area.
Bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals.

We also view the deliberative process as distinct from village chiefs changing their behavior as a result of *increased monitoring* by civil society leaders. In this view, village chiefs are likely to shirk in the absence of monitoring, but once a civil society leader is informed about village governance, they are likely to change their behavior due to the increased possibility of sanctions.

We note that our field experiment was not explicitly designed to distinguish between these mechanisms, but there are distinct observable implications of each mechanism that we can examine to help adjudicate between them. In particular, the deliberative mechanism is distinct from the capacity mechanism in that the effect should be dependent on new civil society leaders, rather than existing advisers, being invited. The deliberative mechanism is distinct from the monitoring mechanism in that it should generate changes not only in village chiefs' behavior but also in how they understand village governance. The deliberative mechanism also emphasizes the direct role civil society leaders play in deliberating with the village chief, rather than their role as monitors that trigger top-down or bottom-up sanctions (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984, Popkin 1979). We draw on additional quantitative evidence and qualitative findings to examine these implications.

Quantitative Analysis

We test the observable implications of our theory vis-a-vis alternatives by examining the effects of the experimental arms on variables with differential relevance for alternative mechanisms and by re-estimating the effects presented in the previous section by sub-groups that should be differently affected per alternative mechanisms. We begin by examining (i) whether the experimental arms influence not only village chiefs' behavior but also their understanding of village governance (distinguishing the deliberative mechanism from the monitoring mechanism), and (ii) whether the effects on village chiefs' understandings and behavior are concentrated among village chiefs who actually comply with the instruction to bring a new civil society leader versus an existing adviser (distinguishing the deliberative mechanism from the capacity mechanism).

The columns in Figure 6 represent different outcomes of interest. The first column examines whether the experimental arms affect village chiefs' knowledge of regulations and recommendations regarding village governance, and the second column examines whether the experimental arms affect their attitudes toward inclusive procedures.[39] A change in these outcomes would indicate a change in village chiefs' understanding of village governance. The next three columns examine the decision-making processes and outcomes for which we observed effects in the previous section.

The rows in Figure 6 distinguish between villages where the village chiefs was likely to bring a new civil society leader or an existing adviser with them to the workshops. All village chiefs were instructed to bring a new civil society leader, but about one quarter did not comply with this instruction, bringing existing traditional advisers, for example, their village secretary. We use this variation to develop a model predicting whether or not village chiefs would have brought a new civil society leader with them to the workshop if assigned to this arm of the treatment.[40] Then we divide village chiefs based on their predicted propensity to pick new leaders or existing advisers, allowing us to examine the effects of assignment to the civil society leader arm by sub-group. The sub-group analysis allows us to examine both whether any positive effects are concentrated in the sub-group likely to bring a new civil society and whether there are negative effects in the sub-group likely to bring an existing leader, as this could potentially lead to greater exclusion by giving new information, strengthened access and higher status to an already favored adviser.[41]

The results in Figure 6 indicate that the arm of the experiment that includes a civil society leader changes village chiefs' knowledge of village governance in addition to their decision-making procedures and outcomes, but only in instances in which village chiefs are likely to include a new

[39]Both of these outcomes are indices measured via the survey of village chiefs.

[40]We predict selection of an existing adviser using a logit model based on the village chief's vehicle ownership, income from non-farm sources (dichotomous), education (above primary) and family roots in the village. This simple model classifies 93 percent of cases in the civil society leader arm of the intervention correctly. For more details, see appendix J.

[41]For this reason, an instrumental variable approach is not appropriate in this case.

civil society leader in the training. In these villages, the civil society arm increases village chiefs' knowledge (p-value<0.05, two-tailed), the inclusiveness of their decision-making (p-value<0.01, two-tailed) and the impartiality of their decision-making (p-value<0.01, two-tailed); the civil society arm also has positive (but statistically insignificant effects) on village chiefs' attitudes toward inclusive procedures and households' views of their village chief's legitimacy. In contrast, in the subset of places where village chiefs are predicted to pick an existing adviser, the inclusion of an adviser in the training might actually *harm the village chiefs' attitudes toward inclusive governance*, *decrease the inclusiveness of decision-making processes* and *increase bias* against political opponents relative to the arm in which only the village chief is trained. This suggests that civil society leaders must represent new interests and groups if they are to make local decision-making more inclusive rather than less. The positive effects of the civil society leader arm on village chiefs' knowledge is more consistent with the deliberative mechanism than the monitoring mechanism, and the concentration of effects among village chiefs predicted to bring a new adviser is more consistent with the deliberative mechanism than the capacity mechanism. In appendix K, we present additional quantitative evidence that suggests neither capacity nor monitoring are the mechanism behind our results.

Qualitative Findings

We also draw on our qualitative research to describe the mechanism by which the newly mobilized civil society leaders subsequently influence local decision-making. This research illuminates two points. First, it shows that the newly mobilized civil society leaders influence local decision-making through deliberation with the village chief, rather than by activating top-down or bottom-up pressure. Second, it suggests *how* the second arm of the intervention works to broaden village chiefs' advisers by giving the trained civil society leaders new information valued by the village chief, new access to the village chief, and new status as an adviser.

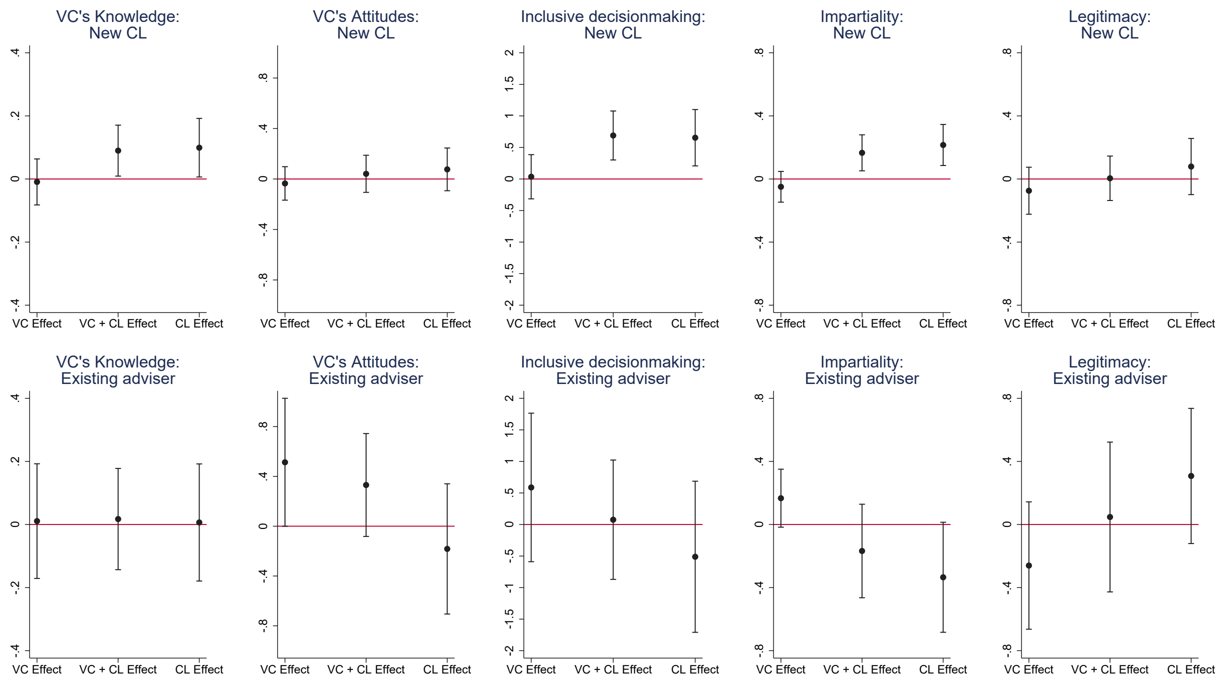


Figure 6: Treatment Effects on Village Chiefs' Understanding and Decision-Making By New or Existing Advisers. ***Bars denote 95 percent confidence intervals.***

The follow-up qualitative research shows that trained civil society leaders affect decision-making via existing customary institutions. They almost always become formal or informal advisers to the village chief subsequent to the training sessions. As an example, when we asked village chiefs to invite their close advisers to meet with us for discussion, 80 percent of the village chiefs who were trained alongside civil society leaders included the trained civil society leader in this group, while only 25 percent of village chiefs trained alone invited the person they subsequently said they would choose for inclusion in the training if given the option. In addition, we observed the trained civil society leaders spoke freely during our subsequent discussions with the village chief and the group of assembled advisers.

The qualitative research also indicates that civil society leaders believe the best way to influence outcomes is through direct deliberations with the village chief. When civil society leaders were asked what they could do if the village chief was not making decisions in a proper manner, they

emphasized that they would speak with him directly about the issue, either individually or together with other advisers.[42] In contrast, we find little evidence that the trained civil society leaders constrain the village chief by acting as "fire alarms" (activating sanctions from higher level leaders) or community mobilizers (activating community pressure).

Our open-ended interviews with civil society leaders also underscore how they use deliberation combined with appeals about the importance of deliberative processes to influence the decision-making of village chiefs. When civil society leaders were asked how they could change the behavior of village chiefs, they described a process that involved providing advice and communicating expectations of good behavior to the leader. For example, one civil society leader was confident the village chief would "listen [to him] and change his behavior because he is an open minded person who respects the laws", while other civil society leaders described their village chiefs as likely to take advice because they were "so keen to learn and lead his people correctly," "level-headed" and "unlike the hot-heads [elsewhere in the district]."[43]

The interviews with civil society leaders and village chiefs also provide suggestive evidence on *why* the second arm of the intervention works to generate more inclusive governance, suggesting it gives the trained civil society leaders new information and strengthened relationships with the village chief that make them valued confidantes. Trained civil society leaders emphasized that the experience had made them the "close confidante[s]", "strategic partners" or "mutual friends" of the village chief.[44] Village chiefs emphasized how the training had provided the civil society leaders with important information and resulted in increased collaboration.[45]

[42] Interview with CL in village 20515; interview with CL in village 21202; interview with CL in village 21507; interview with CL in village 22909; interview with CL in village 23510; interview with CL in village 31729; interview with CL in village 20517.

[43] Interview with CL in village 21115; interview with CL in village 22909; interview with CL in village 21202; interview with CL in village 21507.

[44] Interview with CL in village 20515; interview with CL in village 20202; interview with CL in village 21507; interview with CL in village 22909; interview with CL in village 23510; interview with CL in village 31729.

[45] Interview with VH in village 31729; interview with VH in village 22909, interview with VH in village 20515.

Together with the evidence presented in earlier sections, this suggests that traditional political institutions have the potential to improve inclusion and representation through incremental steps. One arm of the intervention we study was effective in broadening the advisers who participated in deliberations with the village chief in traditional political institutions, resulting in significant improvements in some decision-making outcomes.

Conclusion

This study has important implications both for how scholars conceive of traditional political institutions and how policymakers engage with them. Political leaders concerned with bias in these institutions have typically tried to supplant them, often with limited success and/or negative unintended consequences (Burr and Kyed 2007). A growing body of literature shows the limited governance benefits from donor-funded projects that seek to improve decision-making by supplanting traditional political institutions with new democratic committee structures as part of Community-Driven Development programs (Casey 2018).

In contrast, our research shows the possibility of reforming traditional institutions through incremental changes within them that broaden advisers and councils. In doing so, it contributes to a growing literature on how traditional legacies can both harm and help accountability depending on context (Englebert 2000; Tsai 2007; Wilfahrt 2018). Although customary institutions often include components that fall short of ideals regarding democracy and individual rights, they also have the potential to adapt to become more inclusive and representative.

Our research shows the viability of creating more inclusive and impartial decision-making by broadening advisers within traditional institutions. This suggests many possibilities for reform. Even absent national-level reforms, significant improvements in inclusiveness are possible at the local level. Our research highlights a mechanism that could plausibly be used to reduce bias in traditional decision-making on numerous dimensions, including gender bias, ethnic bias, religious

bias and political bias.

Further research is necessary to examine the viability of achieving reform by broadening consultation within traditional institutions in other locations and via other types of interventions. Still, we are optimistic about the possibility of employing this type of reform in other contexts. Most contemporary traditional political institutions include advisory councils and deliberative processes (Baldwin and Holzinger 2019). Data from the Program on Governance and Local Development indicates advisory councils are regularly consulted by local-level traditional leaders in rural Zambia, rural Malawi and (peri-)urban Malawi but that these councils vary in size and composition, suggesting the possibility of making governance more inclusive through diversification of advisers in these setting.[46] One can imagine a variety of interventions and shocks that might give new civil society leaders' status as advisers, including policy changes, economic shocks and in-migration.[47] Research in other contexts has shown the value of engagement with new perspectives, especially as presented by elites and community members with similar social status, in changing views (Chang and Peisakhin 2019; Paler et al. 2020).

Future research should also examine the effects of broadening traditional chiefs' advisers on inclusive governance over the long term. Importantly, the intervention we study managed not just to bring new civil society leaders into traditional institutions but to bring in civil society leaders representing historically marginalized groups, such as women and members of politically weak families. To the extent that greater descriptive representation of marginalized groups can generate better decision-making, this is a promising step.

[46] See appendix B.

[47] On the effect of long-term state-building processes on social networks in sub-Saharan Africa, see MacLean (2010).

References

Acemoglu, Daron, Tristan Reed and James Robinson. 2014. "Chiefs: Economic Development and Elite Control of Civil Society in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Political Economy* 122(2):319–68.

Alexander, Jocelyn. 1996. Things Fall Apart, the Center Can Hold: Processes of Post-War Political Change in Zimbabwe's Rural Areas. In *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, ed. Ngwabi Bhebhe and Terence Ranger. Oxford: James Currey pp. 131–162.

Baldwin, Kate. 2016. *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Baldwin, Kate and Katharina Holzinger. 2019. "Traditional Political Institutions and Democracy: Reassessing their Compatibility and Accountability." *Comparative Political Studies* 52(12):1747–1774.

Barr, Abigail. 2004. "Forging Effective New Communities: The Evolution of Civil Society in Zimbabwean Resettlement Villages." *World development* 32(10):1753–1766.

Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikolopov. 2013. "Empowering Women through Development Aid: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan." *American Political Science Review* pp. 540–557.

Bleck, Jaimie and Kristin Michelitch. 2015. "The 2012 Crisis in Mali: Ongoing Empirical State Failure." *African Affairs* 114(457):598–623.

Bourdillon, Michael FC. 1976. *The Shona peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to their Religion*. Vol. 1 Mambo Press.

Burr, Lars and Helen Kyed. 2007. *State Recognition and Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Dawn for Traditional Tuthorities?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Carlson, Elizabeth and Brigitte Seim. 2020. "Honor among Chiefs: An Experiment on Monitoring and Diversion Among Traditional Leaders in Malawi." *The Journal of Development Studies* pp. 1–17.

Casey, Katherine. 2018. "Radical Decentralization: Does Community-Driven Development Work?" *Annual Review of Economics* 10:139–163.

Chambers, Simone. 1996. *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Chang, Han Il and Leonid Peisakhin. 2019. "Building Cooperation Among Groups in Conflict: An Experiment on Intersectarian Cooperation in Lebanon." *American Journal of Political Science* 63(1):146–162.

Chanock, Martin. 1985. *Law, Custom, and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia*. Cambridge, UK: Heineman.

Clayton, Amanda. 2014. "Electoral Gender Quotas and Attitudes Toward Traditional Leaders: A Policy Experiment in Lesotho." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 33(1):1007–1026.

Comaroff, John L and Jean Comaroff. 1997. "Postcolonial Politics and Discourses of Democracy in Southern Africa: An Anthropological Reflection on African Political Modernities." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 53(2):123–146.

Cooper, Jasper. 2018. "State Capacity and Gender Inequality: Experimental Evidence from Papua New Guinea." *Manuscript, University of South Carolina* .

De Kadt, Daniel and Horacio A Larreguy. 2018. "Agents of the Regime? Traditional Leaders and Electoral Politics in South Africa." *The Journal of Politics* 80(2):382–399.

Díaz-Cayeros, Alberto, Beatriz Magaloni and Alexander Ruiz-Euler. 2014. "Traditional Governance, Citizen Engagement, and Local Public Goods: Evidence from Mexico." *World Development* 53:80–93.

Englebert, Pierre. 2000. *State Legitimacy and Development in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Fearon, James D, Macartan Humphreys, Jeremy M Weinstein et al. 2015. "How Does Development Assistance Affect Collective Action Capacity? Results from a Field Experiment in Post-Conflict Liberia." *American Political Science Review* 109(3):450–469.

Goist, Mitchell and Florian Kern. 2018. "Traditional Institutions and Social Cooperation: Experimental Evidence from the Buganda Kingdom." *Research and Politics* 5(1):1–9.

Goldstein, Markus and Christopher Udry. 2008. "The Profits of Power: Land Rights and Agricultural Investment in Ghana." *Journal of political Economy* 116(6):981–1022.

Gutmann, Amy and Dennis F Thompson. 2004. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hafer, Catherine and Dimitri Landa. 2007. "Deliberation as Self-Discovery and Institutions for Political Speech." *Journal of theoretical Politics* 19(3):329–360.

Holleman, Johan Frederik. 1969. *Shona Customary Law: With Reference to Kinship, Marriage, the Family and the Estate*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Holzinger, Katharina, Florian G Kern and Daniela Kromrey. 2016. "The Dualism of Contemporary Traditional Governance and the State: Institutional Setups and Political Consequences." *Political Research Quarterly* 69(3):469–481.

Honig, Lauren. 2017. "Selecting the State or Choosing the Chief? The Political Determinants of Smallholder Land Titling." *World Development* 100:94–107.

Human-Rights-Watch. 2008. *" Bullets for Each of You": State-sponsored Violence Since Zimbabwe's March 29 Elections*. Human Rights Watch.

Humphreys, Macartan, William A Masters and Martin E Sandbu. 2006. "The Role of Leaders in Democratic Deliberations: Results from a Field Experiment in São Tomé and Príncipe." *World Politics* 58(4):583–622.

Karpowitz, Christopher F. and Tali Mendelberg. 2011. *An Experimental Approach to Citizen Deliberation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

King, Elisabeth and Cyrus Samii. 2014. "Fast-Track Institution Building in Conflict-Affected Countries? Insights from Recent Field Experiments." *World Development* 64:740–754.

Lieberman, Evan S. 2005. "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research." *American political Science Review* 99(3):435–452.

Logan, Carolyn. 2013. "The Roots of Resilience: Exploring Popular Support for African Traditional Authorities." *African Affairs* 112(448):353–376.

MacLean, Lauren M. 2010. *Informal Institutions and Citizenship in Rural Africa: Risk and Reciprocity in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Magaloni, Beatriz, Alberto Díaz-Cayeros and Alexander Ruiz Euler. 2019. "Public Good Provision and Traditional Governance in Indigenous Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico." *Comparative Political Studies* 52(12):1841–1880.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1980. *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes".” *The Journal of politics* 61(3):628–657.

McCubbins, Mathew D and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 165–179.

Mendelberg, Tali, Christopher F Karpowitz and Nicholas Goedert. 2014. “Does descriptive representation facilitate women’s distinctive voice? How gender composition and decision rules affect deliberation.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2):291–306.

Mondlane, Eduardo. 1969. *The Struggle for Mozambique*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books.

Muriaas, Ragnhild L, Vibeke Wang, Lindsay Benstead, Boniface Dulani and Lise Rakner. 2019. “Why the Gender of Traditional Authorities Matters: Intersectionality and Women’s Rights Advocacy in Malawi.” *Comparative Political Studies* 52(12):1881–1924.

Murtazashvili, Jennifer Brick. 2016. *Informal Order and the State in Afghanistan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mutopo, Patience. 2014. *Women, Mobility and Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe: Experiences of Fast Track Land Reform*. Leiden: Brill.

Muyengwa, Shylock and Brian Child. 2017. “Re-assertion of Elite Control in Masoka’s Wildlife Program, Zimbabwe.” *Journal of Sustainable Development* 10(6):28–40.

Ncube, Godfrey Tabona. 2011. “Crisis of Communal Leadership: Post-colonial Local Government Reform and Administrative Conflict with Traditional Authorities in the Communal Areas of Zimbabwe, 1980-2008.” *African Journal of History and Culture* 3(6):89–95.

Nelson, Mandela. 1994. *Long Walk to Freedom :The Autobiography of Mandela*. little Brown and Company.

Ntsebeza, Lungisile. 2005. *Democracy compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of the Land in South Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

Paler, Laura, Leslie Marshall, Sami Atallah et al. 2020. "How Cross-Cutting Discussion Shapes Support for Ethnic Politics: Evidence from an Experiment in Lebanon." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15(1):33–71.

Popkin, Samuel L. 1979. *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. Civil society and the Reconstruction of Failed States. In *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ pp. 237–255.

Ranger, Terence. 1993. *Invention of Tradition Revised*. London: Macmillon.

Richards, Audrey. 1951. *The Bemba of North-eastern Rhodesia*. London: .

Sandefur, Justin and Bilal Siddiqi. 2013. Delivering Justice to the Poor: Theory and Experimental Evidence from Liberia. In *Manuscript, World Bank*. Vol. 20.

Stasavage, David. 2020. "The Rise of Western Democracy: Why it Happened in Europe and Not China or the Middle East.".

Tsai, Lily L. 2007. *Accountability without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Van der Windt, Peter and Maarten Voors. 2020. "Traditional Leaders and the 2014-2015 Ebola Epidemic." *Journal of Politics* .

Vansina, Jan. 1966. *Kingdoms of the Savanna*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Wilfahrt, Martha. 2018. "Precolonial Legacies and Institutional Congruence in Public Goods Delivery: Evidence from Decentralized West Africa." *World Politics* 70(2):239–274.

Young, Lauren E. 2019. "The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe." *American Political Science Review* 113(1):140–155.