Foreign Aid and Political Support: How Politicians' Aid Oversight Capacity and Voter Information Condition Credit Giving

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Low information about foreign aid projects may result in politicians receiving undeserved credit, confounding political accountability. But in some cases, politicians exert effort to ensure the success of projects and presumably deserve credit from voters. We show that the credit politicians receive depends both on voter information and the capacity of political offices for providing oversight. Drawing on original survey data from politicians and NGOs in Uganda, we describe circumstances under which politicians support the realization and administration of aid projects. We then use an experiment to show that information about foreign financing and NGO implementation of these projects reduces support for incumbent politicians only when their offices have low aid oversight capacity. We also provide evidence from other African countries showing that credit-giving for aid depends on both information and state capacity. Our results suggest that voters think realistically about what politicians might have contributed to aid projects and update their assessments accordingly.

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International aid is frequently argued to undermine political accountability because it allows leaders to coopt or coerce potential opponents.[1] Even in a world where aid is not fungible and cannot be diverted for cooptation or coercion, it may undermine accountability if politicians receive unearned credit for foreign aid projects. Standard political accountability models suggest that voters make inferences about the quality of politicians based on observed outcomes in their communities, and then vote to select the most able politician in electoral contests.[2] The presence of international aid flows and non-governmental service provision complicates this inferential process and can result in inflated support for politicians if they receive credit for projects that have materialized independent of their efforts.[3]

Yet politicians sometimes play a significant role in soliciting foreign funding, arranging access for non-government organizations, or facilitating interactions between aid organizations and local communities.[4] In resource-poor environments, these might be key dimensions of political performance on which voters want to assess elected officials.[5] In these cases, upon seeing a well-executed aid project, voters should update their perceptions of a politician's effort and skill in a positive direction.

A small set of existing studies has examined cases where development resources arrive in localities because of exogenous decision mechanisms, such as strict poverty targeting guidelines or random assignment.[6] These studies find that politicians receive credit for these

[1] Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol 2008; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2009; Morrison 2009
[2] Ferejohn 1986; Fearon 1999; Ashworth 2012.
[3] Guiteras and Mobarak 2015; Cruz and Schneider 2017; Baldwin and Winters 2020; Blair and Winters 2020; Springman 2020a; Springman 2020b.
[4] Brass 2012; Brass 2016; Springman 2020b; Tsai 2011.
[5] Baldwin 2013; Jablonski 2014; Dolan 2020.
[6] Guiteras and Mobarak 2015; Cruz and Schneider 2017; Springman 2020b.

projects, even though there is no evidence that they were involved in securing or administering the project. This might result either from the behavior of the politicians or inferences made by the public. Cruz and Schneider document how politicians engage in actions that make them look like they were involved in a project in order to claim credit[7], whereas Guiteras and Mobarak and Springman assert that citizens might give politicians credit even in the absence of overt credit-claiming.[8] On the other hand, other literature has discussed the ways in which even apparently non-state service provision is, in reality, the result of coproduction between state and non-state actors.[9] These authors argue that, in many cases, politicians do, in fact, deserve some credit for goods and services that are apparently provided by non-state actors.

To better understand how voters attribute credit, we identify settings where credit for international aid projects that improve local well-being is more or less likely to be deserved, emphasizing the importance of variation in aid oversight capacity across political offices. By combining surveys of project implementers, politicians, and citizens, we are able to show 1) that different political offices have different capacities to oversee aid projects, making the presence and quality of aid projects a differentially informative signal of politician quality depending on the politician's office's aid oversight capacity, and 2) that citizens' differentially use information about foreign financing and non-government implementing partners to update their opinions of politicians depending on the aid oversight capacity of the politician's office. For those politicians most plausibly involved in facilitating an aid project, information about foreign funding and non-government implementation does not reduce the credit that they

[7] Cruz and Schneider 2017.
[8] Guiteras and Mobarak 2015; Springman 2020b.
[9] Tsai 2011; Brass 2012; Brass 2016.

receive, whereas for other politicians, we observe a loss of credit as a result of the new information. This finding challenges common perceptions that all politicians receive credit for aid projects as well as existing normative claims that no politician should receive credit for aid projects.

We begin by reviewing the existing literature on the effects of international aid on incumbent support and by outlining the ways in which the effects of aid projects on incumbent support should differ by aid oversight capacity if rational voters are fully informed about project funders and implementers. We then provide three types of evidence on the importance of aid oversight capacity for conditioning the inferences that voters make about incumbent performance based on the presence of international aid projects. First, we provide descriptive information from 18 aid-receiving localities in Uganda that shows evidence of systematic variation across political offices in terms of involvement in donor-funded projects administered by NGOs (i.e., "bypass aid" projects[10]). Second, we demonstrate how this variation in the likelihood of involvement conditions how citizens update their beliefs about politicians in reaction to information about the origins and administration of well-executed international aid projects. Most of the Ugandan citizens in our study believe that projects are government implemented and give credit to their local politicians in the baseline condition. When they are provided with information that the projects are foreign-financed and NGO-implemented, they reduce the credit provided to politicians, but the effects are concentrated among politicians who hold political offices with a *low* likelihood of involvement in foreign aid projects. Citizens continue to credit politicians for projects identified as foreign aid if politicians' offices have high

[10] Dietrich 2013.

capacity for involvement in aid projects. Third, we consider the external validity of our experimental findings drawing on observational data from Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda. Turning around the outcome variable to look at credit attribution to foreign actors, we study how the effect of aid projects on credit given to international donors and NGOs depends on both citizen information and state capacity using Afrobarometer data and geocoded AidData.[11] We show that proximity to aid projects increases individual beliefs that donors and NGOs are helpful *only* where state oversight capacity is low and citizen information is high. Together, this supports our claim that citizens interpret information about foreign aid and non-governmental service provision with an eye to the extent to which their elected politicians are likely to have been involved in realizing the work undertaken by these entities.

Foreign Aid and Domestic Political Accountability

Does international aid undermine political accountability? Prominent research suggests that aid may prolong the rule of undemocratic leaders, especially when aid is fungible and can be directed to suppression or cooption of potential regime opponents.[12] However, even aid targeted for specific projects may undermine political accountability if it inflates support for

[11] For the cross-national data analysis, it is necessary to flip the dependent variable due to data availability and as a result of the more diverse politicians who are likely to be involved in aid projects across the diverse political institutions and projects included in this data set.

[12] Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol 2008; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2009; Morrison 2009; Bermeo 2016.

incumbent politicians who would otherwise be thrown out of office on the basis of their performance.

In standard models of political accountability, voters face an adverse selection problem: incumbent politicians may be better or worse than an alternative, and voters want to use their observations about the state of the world to make inferences about the quality of the incumbent politician and whether or not she should be retained.[13] If voters are rational and incorporate positive signals into their voting calculus, then voters observing particularly well-executed government projects should update positively about the political representatives responsible for the projects. That is, they will take the quality of execution as a signal of how competent the politicians are. A number of existing studies suggest voters in new democracies increase their support for incumbents upon receiving information about well-executed government projects that can clearly be attributed to these politicians.[14]

If that is how rational voters should update their beliefs based on government projects, what inferences should voters make about well-executed international aid projects? A large strand of the literature views international aid projects – and especially "bypass aid" projects that are administered by NGOs – as going around the government.[15] From this perspective, the outcomes of these projects are independent of the quality of political representatives in the areas where the projects are executed. As a result, fully-informed, rational voters should *not*

[13] Ferejohn 1986; Fearon 1999; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; Ashworth 2012.
[14] Harding 2015; Harding 2020; Martin and Raffler 2021; although see Jablonski et al. 2021 and the overall conclusions of Dunning et al. 2019. Among studies of the effects of information about government performance, there is an important distinction between studies that provide respondents information on the quality of services without additional information on the actors responsible for these outcomes and studies that provide respondents with information related to actors' involvement in achieving outcomes. Our study falls in the latter category.
[15] Dietrich 2013; Dietrich 2016.

update about their political representatives if they observe an internationally funded aid project, particularly one that is NGO-implemented. If they do update based on the presence of a high-quality project, as a result of misattribution of the project to the government, this will result in inflated support for politicians.

Empirically, do international aid projects result in increased support for politicians? In Table 1, we review existing literature that examines the effects of internationally-funded aid projects on incumbent support. Current studies find inconsistent effects. We categorize the studies by the type of aid (i.e., whether it is traditional aid to governments or bypass aid); our assumption is that government actors, on average, are less involved in providing bypass aid.[16] We also classify the studies, where possible, according to the amount of information voters were likely to have about the organizations formally responsible for the foreign aid project.

At the top of the table are studies that rely on projects funded by the World Bank or regional development banks. In these projects, the most common implementer is the government, and the role of the international development organization is unlikely to be widely advertised to project beneficiaries. As a result, it is not surprising that we see consistently positive relationships between the presence of projects and support for the government among these studies: the government likely has been directly involved in them, and the role of foreign funding may not have been widely advertised. In the middle, there are a set of studies that include a diverse set of aid projects; most of these projects are likely traditional aid to governments. Here we see mixed results about how the presence of project affects support for

[16] Survey data collected among Ugandan politicians provides evidence for this claim; see Appendix Figure A2.

incumbent governments. At the bottom of the table, we consider studies of aid projects that largely bypass government. We again see mixed evidence.

Study	Location	Source of Aid	Aid Imple-menter	Level of Information about Aid	Credit Attribution Outcome	Method	Impact of Aid on Credit Attribution
Jablonski (2014)	Kenya	World Bank, African Dev. Bank	Gov't	Unknown	Votes for Incumbent Regime	Observational	Positive
Knutsen and Kotsadam (2020)	Africa	World Bank	Gov't	Unknown	Support for Incumbent Leader	Difference-in-Difference	Positive
Briggs (2012)	Ghana	World Bank	Gov't	Unknown	Support for Incumbent Government	Observational	Positive
Cruz and Schneider (2017)	Philippines	World Bank	Gov't	Low	Support for Local Incumbents	Observational / RDD	Positive
Briggs (2015)	Africa	OECD-DAC Donors	Mixed	Unknown	Election Outcomes	Observational	Positive
Briggs (2019)	Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda	All donors reporting to aid info mgmt. system	Mixed	Unknown	Support for Incumbents	Difference-in-Difference	Negative
Springman (2020a)	Uganda	Donors reporting to aid info mgmt. system	NGO	Unknown	Winning Margin of President	Downstream Experiment	Positive
Guiteras and Mobarak (2015)	Bangladesh	NGO	NGO	Low and then High	Support for Local Incumbents	Experiment	Positive, then Null
Knutsen and Kotsadam (2020)	Africa	China	China	High	Support for Incumbent Leader	Difference-in-Difference	Null

Table 1. Existing Evidence on Foreign Aid and Incumbent Support.

The patterns in Table 1 suggest that the characteristics of aid projects and information levels are important for explaining when incumbents gain support from aid. In general, incumbents appear to get more credit for international aid projects channeled through the government. For international aid projects channeled through NGOs, politicians appear to get credit in low-information settings but not when information levels are high.[17]

Characteristics of the aid projects and the information level of citizens go a long way in explaining the variation observed in Table 1, but they cannot explain all of the variation. In particular, there appears to be significant variation in the effects of international aid projects across countries, even when there are not large differences in types of aid and information levels. For example, Briggs and Jablonski find positive effects of internationally funded projects on support for incumbents in Kenya and Ghana[18], but in a different article, Briggs finds negative effects of internationally-funded projects on incumbent support across three African countries, with the negative effects concentrated in Nigeria.[19] In comparing the differential effects observed in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria, it is notable that the first two have stronger state capacity defined as an ability of the government to make and implement policy.[20] This distinction helps motivate the variable that we emphasize: the oversight capacity of political offices for international aid projects.

We use the term aid oversight capacity as an umbrella term to refer to the capacity of a political office for involvement in international aid projects. It includes lobbying for the projects

[17] See Guiteras and Mobarak 2015; Springman 2020a; as compared to Knutsen and Kotsadam 2020.
[18] Briggs 2012; Jablonski 2014.
[19] Briggs 2019.
[20] According to either the Mo Ibrahim Index or the Worldwide Governance Indicators.

from donors, facilitating bureaucratic approvals, mobilizing the community in support of the project, securing secondary funding that is often required for projects to come to fruition *and* the monitoring of project operations. We imagine politicians holding particular offices to be involved in overseeing multiple stages of the processes of project development and implementation, and we care about the general capacity to be involved across all stages, summarizing it as "aid oversight capacity."[21]

For any particular type of aid, some political offices have greater capacity for providing oversight of international aid projects than others. This is likely to vary across and within countries and locations. In general, political offices in Botswana probably have more capacity for oversight than those in Uganda, but political offices in Central Uganda likely have more capacity for oversight than those in Northern Uganda. Similarly, within a particular location, aid oversight capacity is likely to vary with the characteristics of the different political offices in that location (e.g., local councilors are likely to have less capacity for oversight of aid projects than executive mayors).[22]

Just because a particular office has oversight capacity does not mean that a politician necessarily will use that capacity in ways that increase the number of high-quality projects in their constituency. That is, oversight capacity, in our conceptualization, is a characteristic of political offices, and those political offices may be held by "good" or "bad" politicians. Our key argument is that the aid oversight capacity of political offices conditions the effects of

[21] Note that we do not necessarily think that citizens need to be able to enumerate all of these ways in which politicians might be involved in projects; we believe that they can have a general, encompassing idea of oversight capacity.

[22] The capacity of political offices to oversee international aid projects is likely to vary more than their capacity to oversee government-funded and implemented projects (e.g., both legislative and executive politicians oversee financing and/or implementation of government projects).

information about international aid on citizen support for political incumbents. This is because oversight capacity influences the extent to which the realization of aid projects provides a signal of a politician's quality. In contexts of high aid oversight capacity, international aid projects are informative signals of a politician's quality; indeed, they may be as informative or even more informative than government projects in helping citizens evaluate a politician's performance. In contexts of low oversight capacity, on the other hand, international aid projects are not informative signals of a politician's quality, because it is less likely that the politician has played or is playing a role in the project.

Critically, aid oversight capacity is a characteristic of political offices, rather than politicians. As a result, we expect citizens to have more information about the oversight capacity of offices vis-à-vis aid projects than information about the involvement of different actors in a typical development project. In many aid-dependent contexts, citizens have high uncertainty about the actors responsible for funding and implementing any particular project; even citizens who have interacted directly with a project may have high levels of uncertainty about the actors involved in funding, implementing and overseeing it, creating an attribution problem.[23] However, citizens can develop fairly accurate knowledge of the capacity of particular political offices to facilitate aid projects so long as they can occasionally observe informative clues about the actors involved in funding, implementing, and overseeing particular projects in their communities; over multiple political terms, they can develop informed

[23] Winters 2010.

understandings of the likelihood of a particular political office being involved in donor and NGO projects.[24]

As a result, even if voters are very uncertain about the actors involved in providing a particular aid project, they are likely to know something about the political oversight capacity of a political office and the plausibility of a politician holding that office being involved in an international aid project. This limits the ability of politicians to take credit for international aid projects when citizens have high information about their source.

In Table 2, we summarize our expectations about the credit that voters will give to politicians for high-quality aid projects based on the level of information they have about the organizations formally responsible for foreign-funded and NGO-implemented aid projects and their understanding of a political office's capacity to oversee international projects. We focus on this dimension of information about aid projects, given that donors and NGOs try to advertise these facts, but with varying levels of effort and success. Where little information is available, we expect that most people assume that the project is a government project and therefore give credit to politicians. But when citizens are well informed about a project, we expect politicians to receive credit only if the politician's office has high oversight capacity. Politicians, therefore, may receive credit either because they likely deserve it (the right-hand column) or because voters lack information (the upper-left-hand quadrant). When politicians hold offices that lack oversight capacity *and* citizens are well-informed, those politicians will not

[24] This is consistent with other scholars' findings that citizens are aware of the varied capacity of state actors across different institutional and social contexts. See Auerbach and Kruks-Wisner 2020 on India and Martin and Raffler 2021 on Uganda.

receive credit. Below, we experimentally manipulate the level of information that citizens have and ask questions about politicians holding offices with low and high oversight capacity.

	Political Office with Low Aid Oversight Capacity	**Political Office with High Aid Oversight Capacity**
Low Citizen Information about Aid Project Funder and Implementer	High Credit to Politician	High Credit to Politician
High Citizen Information about Aid Project Funder and Implementer	Low Credit to Politician	High Credit to Politician

Table 2. Expectations for Credit Given to Politicians for High-Quality Projects.

In the next section of the paper, we provide novel evidence about the existence of variation in aid oversight capacity across political offices in Uganda, drawing on data collected from aid-project implementers. We then present results from an information experiment that provided different information on the funding and implementation of aid projects to randomly assigned respondents, thereby moving them between the top row and the bottom row of Table 2. This experiment provides empirical evidence of the interaction effect highlighted in Table 2: only for offices with low oversight capacity does information about aid projects lead to less credit for politicians. In the final section, we show complementary evidence from a wider sample of countries – Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda – indicating this combination of information and political oversight capacity affects how people think about local projects; in that section, we consider the inverse form of credit attribution – credit to international donors

and NGOs – and show how aid projects increase the perceived helpfulness of donors and NGOs only in contexts of low state oversight capacity and informed citizens.

Aid Oversight Capacity: Under What Circumstances are Politicians Involved in Aid Projects in Uganda?

We begin by asking a descriptive question: Under what circumstances do politicians play a role in the provision of foreign aid projects that are implemented by non-governmental organizations (i.e., bypass aid)? While official government organs may not be implementing these projects, in some settings, government officials nonetheless facilitate, approve, and monitor such projects. Among a set of bypass aid projects in Uganda, we show that local politicians are often significantly involved in the projects, but we also show that this involvement varies across offices and across contexts, suggesting variation in aid oversight capacity.

Uganda is an appropriate country for exploring this question because of the important role that foreign aid plays in the Ugandan economy, the significant decentralization of political authority that allows for the possibility of attributing service delivery to a variety of political and non-political actors, and the within-country variation in state oversight capacity. Over the past 20 years, ODA as a percentage of GNI has averaged almost 10 percent in Uganda, putting it in the 80th percentile for aid dependence. In addition, at the time of this study, a considerable portion of international aid flowed through non-governmental organizations.[25] Despite the

[25] Several political controversies after 2010 – a 2012 corruption scandal in the Office of the Prime Minister and the 2014 passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act – led some donors to suspend aid and some to shift it toward non-government channels.

prominence of aid in the economy, we show below that most Ugandans do not have precise information about specific aid projects.

Service provision is a highly salient issue, and the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) uses claims of successful service delivery as a means to legitimate its rule.[26] At the same time, Uganda is highly decentralized – with meaningful political actors at the village (LC1), sub-county (LC3), and district (LC5) levels – opening the door for voters to attribute service delivery to a variety of different politicians. At the sub-country and district levels, Ugandans elect politicians to both the executive and legislative branches, which have varying responsibilities and capacities vis-à-vis international aid. In addition, there is considerable geographic variation in state capacity within Uganda as a result of the long-run civil war which weakened local government capacity in the conflict-affected northern regions, with local politicians often excluded from engagement with international donors.[27]

In order to understand the involvement of different politicians in bypass aid projects, we analyze responses from a survey of the implementing partners of 18 aid projects located throughout Uganda, all of which received funding from a prominent foreign source of bypass aid.[28] The 18 bypass aid projects that we study were funded through Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) program. We chose to conduct our research around GGP projects because they made up the largest share of geographically-identifiable

[26] Springman 2020a.
[27] In the post-war period, a large portion of international aid for Northern Uganda occurred via the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Uganda, which was run in a centralized manner through the Office of the Prime Minister.
[28] These 18 aid projects also define the sample for the experimental analysis in the next section.

bypass aid projects found in Uganda's Aid Information Management System.[29] From the complete list of GGP projects, we selected projects that were (a) in the water, education or health sector, (b) initiated in the five years prior to our survey, and (c) complete enough that a commissioning ceremony had been planned or held. As we wanted to restrict our sample to bypass aid projects, we excluded GGP projects that funded government-implemented projects.[30] The resulting sample includes projects in all four of Uganda's regions, as indicated in Figure 1.

[29] GGP projects made up three quarters of the active bypass aid projects in the Uganda Aid Information Management System that could be matched to specific districts in 2015. Because we only sampled GGP projects, we cannot say that the sample is representative of all bypass projects in the Uganda Aid Information Management System, but the sample allows us to hold many project details constant across projects in a way that is helpful for the experiment presented in the next section. We address issues of representativeness in Appendix A, showing similarities in politician involvement in GGP projects compared to other bypass aid projects in the same communities.

[30] In the handful of cases in which one local politician was already known not to be seeking re-election, we also excluded the project because we wanted to study voting intention as an outcome.

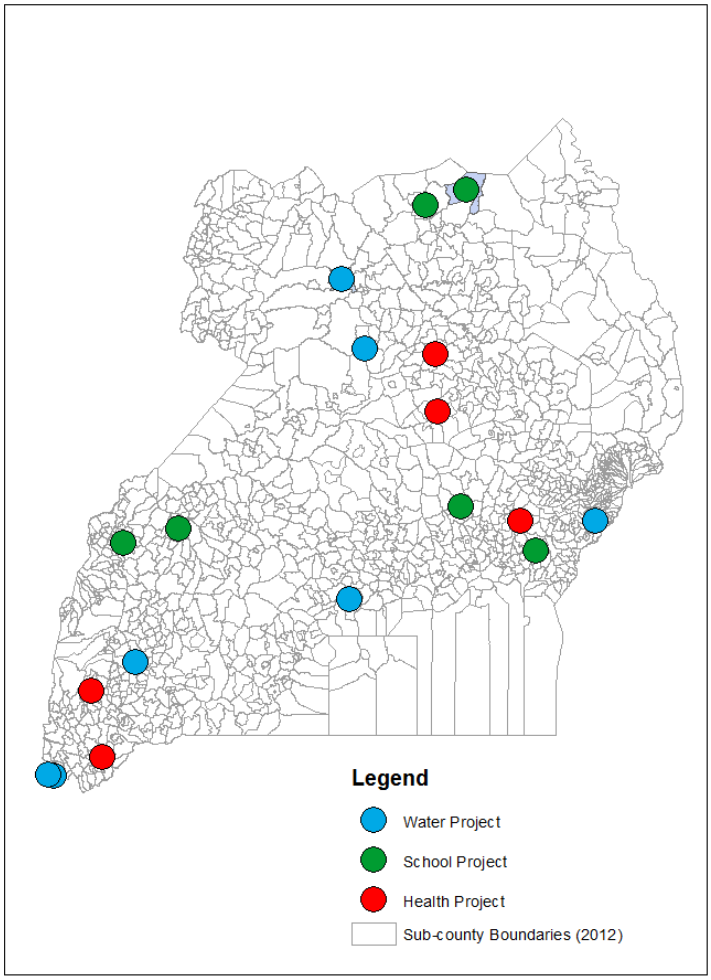

Figure 1. Map of Communities with GGP Projects Selected for Inclusion in the Study.

In all of these projects, the Embassy of Japan provided funds to an NGO or endline service provider, such as a clinic or school, which had applied for the funding as part of a competitive annual solicitation. Studying projects funded through the same mechanism allows us to hold relatively constant many aspects of the projects, including the selection criteria and the approximate amount of funds provided; all of the projects received approximately

US$100,000 in funding through a highly competitive and professional selection process.[31] These projects were all successful and impactful within their communities. In survey interviews of the sub-county (LC3) chairperson, this political official usually listed the GGP project as the first- or second-most-important project in the sub-county in the previous five years. In our survey data that we describe below, nine out of 10 respondents said that the project was of good or very good quality with almost 60 percent saying very good; in every project location in the study, a majority of respondents said that the project was of at least good quality. In addition, 56 percent of our respondents said that they or someone in their household had gone to a site associated with the project.

To measure the extent and ways that politicians are involved in these projects, we conducted structured interviews with the local director or manager of the implementing partner responsible for each GGP project.[32] These interviews asked whether various political representatives (sub-county (LC3) chairpersons, district (LC5) councilors, and Members of Parliament) assisted the project by helping to lobby for it, facilitating bureaucratic procedures, serving as part of the oversight committee to monitor the project, organizing the community,

[31] The program accepts applications from NGOs, medical institutions, educational institutions, and local governments with at least two years of experience implementing development projects, full-time paid staff, and a track record of handling at least 50 percent of requested funds. The application process is very rigorous, involving concept paper submission, interviews, site visits, and then recommendations to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, which makes the final decisions. Only 5 percent of applications are funded. Between 1992 and 2018, 235 projects were funded through this mechanism in Uganda, and 68 were funded during the time period we consider (2011-2016). About half of all projects are in the areas of education, health and water.

[32] In selecting the respondents for our implementing partner survey, our instruction was that "the respondent should be of a sufficiently high rank in the organization to be able to answer questions about the organization's day-to-day operations and about the project on which the survey is focused." We had the names of the individual from the implementing partner who had signed the grant contract with the Japanese Embassy and, in all cases, we began by reaching out to them to arrange an interview, although in about half of cases, we were subsequently directed to interview another member of the organization. In general, we found the respondents to be highly knowledgeable, with none consistently responding "don't know" to our questions about the organization and the project.

or otherwise.[33] We focus on these three political representatives because initial research suggested that they were the politicians most likely to claim credit for the GGP projects and because they provide a mix of executives (sub-county chairperson) and legislators (district councilors and Members of Parliament).[34] Sub-country chairpersons and district councilors represent constituencies of the same size (the sub-county) but in two different levels of local government, while Members of Parliament represent larger constituencies in the national government. The research team conducting the interviews had no affiliation with the GGP projects, and the questions asked about specific types of involvement, which should mitigate social pressure on the implementing partners to overstate political involvement.

The left panel of Figure 2 shows that many politicians helped facilitate these bypass aid projects but that the type and extent of involvement varied by political office. Overall, sub-county chairpersons were the most involved.[35] The implementing partners reported that the majority of sub-country chairpersons were involved in providing bureaucratic assistance, sitting on oversight committees, and organizing communities. The only activity in which they were infrequently involved was lobbying. District councilors and MPs were less consistently involved, but significant numbers were still involved in some activities. In 40 percent of the cases, MPs helped lobby for the project, and in 50 percent of the cases, district councilors helped mobilize

[33] The question about MP involvement was added after the first interviews had been conducted, and so it is available for only 10 of 18 projects. These projects are dispersed across all regions and sectors.

[34] In our surveys with implementing partners, we asked about incidents of politicians claiming credit for projects. Constituency MPs and women's district MPs were the most likely to claim credit for projects (2 incidents for each type of MP), with only one instance of an LC3 chairperson doing so and only one instance of an LC5 chairperson doing so. The greater incidence of MPs claiming credit for projects encouraged us to study credit to MPs in the second round of the survey.

[35] In a parallel result about citizens' perceptions of responsibility for public goods, Martin and Raffler 2021 ask a sample of Ugandans whether the elected sub-county chairperson or the unelected chief bureaucrat in the sub-county is more responsible for the quality of roads in the sub-county, and two-thirds of respondents (across various treatment conditions) report that the elected official is more responsible.

community members. Together, this suggests substantial levels of political involvement in facilitating GGP projects, particularly by sub-country chairpersons, the executive position among the three.

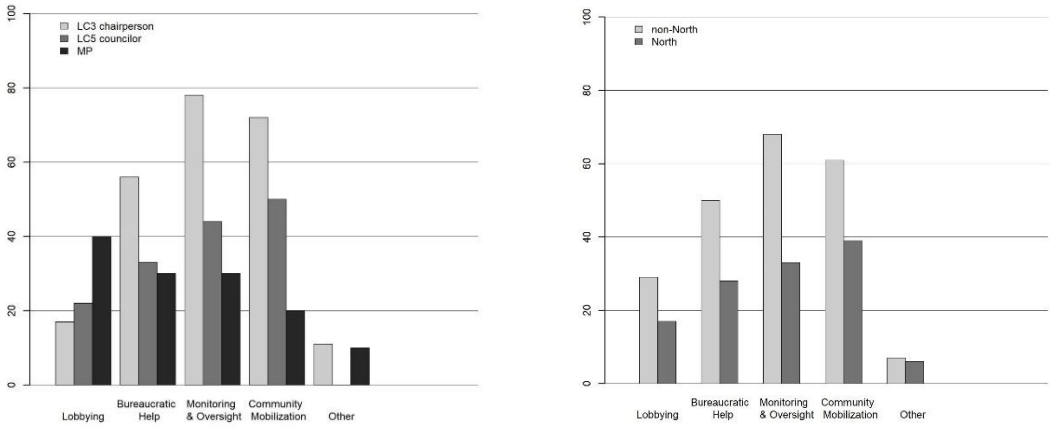

Figure 2. Politicians' Involvement with Bypass Aid Projects by Political Office and Region. Percent of interviewed implementing partners describing such involvement.

Our survey of implementing partners also revealed important differences in political involvement in Northern Uganda compared to the countries' other three regions (Eastern, Central and Western, which we refer to collectively as non-Northern Uganda). These results are displayed in the right panel of Figure 2. Across all three political offices, somewhere between one half and two thirds of politicians are involved in providing bureaucratic assistance, project oversight and community mobilization in non-Northern Uganda. In contrast, in Northern Uganda, the proportion of politicians involved in these three activities is somewhere between one-quarter and two-fifths. Across all three political offices, the capacity of politicians to

facilitate projects appears lower in Northern Uganda, which is consistent with the weaker capacity of the state more generally in this post-conflict region.[36]

We can further analyze the role of political office and region in influencing the extent of involvement in the GGP projects using a regression framework. Our outcome (π_{jk}) is the number of ways that the implementing partner indicated a particular politician assisted with the project (with the count plausibly ranging from 0-5, but with an observed maximum of 4 in the sample). We estimate

$$\pi_{jk} = \beta_1 X_j + \beta_2 X_k + \epsilon_{jk}$$

where *j* indexes each sub-county, *k* indexes political office, and standard errors are clustered by sub-county.

The first model in Table 3 examines whether the amount of involvement varies by political office (with district councilor as the excluded category). We find that sub-county chairpersons are significantly more likely to be involved than other politicians ($p < 0.05$), engaging in almost one more activity per project than other political representatives. In the second model, we also consider whether politicians from the national incumbent NRM party and politicians from Uganda's Northern region are systematically more or less involved in these projects. We do not find a significant difference in the involvement of government and opposition politicians in the GGP projects, but we find that politicians in the north of the country are less likely to be involved ($p < 0.10$), engaging in about one less activity per project than politicians outside the north. The third model is our minimalist model, predicting political involvement using only

[36] We do not find parallel differences in involvement between incumbent party (NRM) politicians and opposition politicians; see Appendix Figure A1.

indicator variables for sub-county chairpersons ($p < 0.05$) and the Northern region ($p < 0.11$). Sub-county chairpersons in non-Northern Uganda are expected to be involved in almost two more ways than district councilors and MPs in Northern Uganda. Thus, some politicians are substantially involved in facilitating the GGP projects, but their capacity for involvement depends on the nature of their political office and the state's bureaucratic capacity in their region.

	(1) Number of ways politician involved in project (0-5)	(2) Number of ways politician involved in project (0-5)	(3) Number of ways politician involved in project (0-5)
Sub-county chairperson	0.83**	0.96***	0.82**
	(0.31)	(0.32)	(0.32)
MP	-0.20	0.03	
	(0.55)	(0.48)	
NRM politician		-0.55	
		(0.41)	
Northern region		-1.09*	-0.84
		(0.58)	(0.48)
Constant	1.50***	2.20***	1.79***
	(0.34)	(0.52)	(0.37)
N	46	46	46

Table 3. Contexts of Political Oversight for Bypass Aid Projects. Effects estimated from OLS regression models. Outcome variable measures the number of ways sub-county chairpersons, district councilors, or MPs were involved in GGP project management, with observations representing politician-project pairs and standard errors clustered by project. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Should this involvement lead citizens to positively update their priors about politicians? Potentially, politician involvement might be superficial, failing to improve project quality. Even worse, politicians might involve themselves in projects as a form of hold-up, trying to extract rents and ultimately making it more difficult for projects to succeed.

We selected a sample of projects that were all ultimately high quality, and so our research design does not allow us to compare the effects of political involvement on the overall success of projects. But we have two pieces of evidence that political involvement in these projects is associated with competence rather than corruption. First, the more ways that politicians were involved in these projects, the more likely implementing partners were to say that the politicians were critical to the success of the projects, as demonstrated in the left panel of Figure 3 ($p < 0.01$). Second, politicians were somewhat more involved in projects that were completed in a timely manner, as compared to those not completed in a timely manner, as demonstrated in the right panel of Figure 3 ($p < 0.12$). This suggests that their involvement was facilitating and not holding up projects.

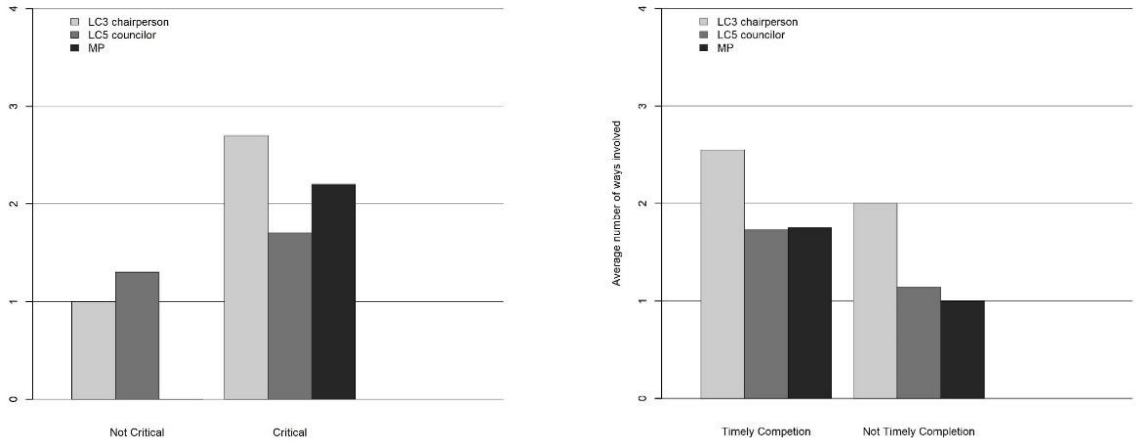

Figure 3. Number of Ways Politicians Were Involved by Whether or Not the Implementing Partner Viewed them as Critical to the Success of the Project and whether the Project was Completed on Time. Data from implementing partner survey.

Experiment on Information and Aid Oversight Capacity in Uganda

We have shown that politicians are differentially involved in donor-funded and NGO-implemented projects in Uganda depending on the aid oversight capacity of their political

offices. This means that if voters incorrectly assume that bypass aid projects are government-funded and implemented (which, as we demonstrate below, is the case in our context), it will confound political accountability in those instances in which politicians actually are not significantly involved in these projects. That is, voters may give credit to politicians for the projects despite their lack of involvement. In contrast, if politicians are significantly involved in facilitating aid projects, then it should not matter whether voters misattribute aid projects as government projects: in either case, the presence of a project provides a signal of politician quality.

In this section, we provide results from an experimental study that tests whether the effect of informing citizens that local infrastructure projects are bypass aid projects varies by politicians' capacity for involvement. Even if voters cannot observe politicians' precise levels of involvement in particular projects, we assume they have a general sense of the political oversight capacity of particular offices and thus whether a politician holding a given office *could plausibly* be involved in an aid project. Our expectation is that information about the foreign funding and non-governmental administration of these projects should only influence voters' levels of support for politicians when those politicians do not have the capacity for involvement in these projects.[37]

[37] This research was pre-registered with Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP), The first round of data collection as [reference removed for review] and the second round as [reference removed for review]. This paper presents results registered in our first pre-analysis plan under the heading of "electoral accountability." We pre-registered our expectation that *"the amount of support politicians receive when citizens receive information about a project [will] be conditional on politicians' perceived and real levels of involvement with the project."* Aid oversight capacity provides the theoretical link between real (but, for voters, unobserved) levels of involvement and voters' perceptions of involvement. A separate paper looks at pre-registered analyses on the outcomes discussed in other parts of this pre-analysis plan [citation removed for review]. We discuss our pre-analysis plans in detail in Appendix O.

Context: Citizen's Information about Aid Projects and Aid Oversight Capacity

Designing our study around a set of 18 successful and high-impact infrastructural projects funded through the GGP mechanism allows us to hold constant whether respondents received "good news" or "bad news"; in all cases, our experimental manipulations are changing information about a high-quality and popular project from which politicians could gain support. The previous section already discussed the overall quality of these projects and respondents' familiarity with the project sites.

Yet, despite widespread familiarity with the projects, the vast majority of community members were uninformed about the donor and implementer, a pattern that has also been observed in other settings.[38] We solicited citizens' prior beliefs about the funder and implementer of the GGP projects immediately before our informational intervention, with the responses displayed in Table 4. The two most common responses were for respondents to either say the government was both the funder and implementer (27 percent of respondents) or to admit ignorance as to which actors were involved in the project (19 percent of respondents). Only 8 percent of our respondents expressed prior beliefs that the project was both donor-funded and NGO-implemented. Citizens' lack of information about the funder and implementer of GGP projects allows us to design an informational intervention around these projects that varies respondents' information about the actors involved in the project.

[38] e.g., Cruz and Schneider 2017; Dietrich, Mahmud, and Winters 2018.

	Prior Beliefs about GGP Project Funder						
Prior Beliefs about GGP Project Implementer	Govern-ment	Japan	Other Interna-tional Donor	NGO	Other	Volun-teered "Don't Know"	Row Total
Government	27.1% (662)	0.9% (23)	2.0% (50)	0.4% (10)	3.1% (77)	1.8% (44)	35.4% (866)
Actual Implementing Entity	4.8% (118)	2.8% (69)	3.4% (82)	4.3% (106)	1.3% (33)	1.3% (31)	18% (439)
Other NGO	0.6% (15)	0.1% (3)	0.3% (7)	0.0% (1)	2% (50)	0.2% (5)	3.3% (81)
Community	2.8% (68)	0.3% (8)	1.3% (33)	0.4% (10)	1.8% (44)	0.7% (16)	7.3% (179)
Other	0.8% (20)	0.4% (11)	1.3% (31)	0.3% (7)	0.5% (13)	0.1% (3)	3.5% (85)
Volunteered "Don't Know"	7.2% (177)	0.9% (22)	1.8% (43)	1.3% (33)	2.2% (53)	19.1% (467)	32.5% (795)
Column Total	43.4% (1,060)	5.6% (136)	10.1% (246)	6.8% (167)	11% (270)	23.1% (566)	100% (2,445)

Table 4. Prior Beliefs about the GGP Projects. Table reports the percentage and frequency of respondents falling in each cell. Note that due to rounding, the percentages in the cells in each row and column do not always sum exactly to the column and row totals.

As the previous section discusses, there is substantial variation in the extent of political involvement in GGP projects by political office and location: sub-county chairpersons are more involved than district councilors or MPs, and politicians outside of Northern Uganda more involved than politicians in Northern Uganda. In the former case, the sub-county chairperson is in an executive position and therefore more likely to become directly involved in mobilization and implementation surrounding a project. In the latter case, the civil war and its aftermath made it harder for individual politicians to play a leading or supervisory role. We argue that voters are likely to be aware of this variation in the capacity of political offices for involvement in bypass aid projects, even if they lack information about the precise levels of involvement of different actors in particular projects, and we provide evidence consistent with this claim.

Experimental Design

Our experiment varied the information presented to citizens about the recent GGP project in their community for which we had simultaneously collected information on politicians' level of involvement. The informational interventions were conducted in the context of a household survey. For each of the selected GGP projects, we randomly sampled 138 households in the parish in which the project was located.[39] Within households, enumerators randomly sampled from among male or female respondents, alternating gender between households. After conducting an introductory survey module, respondents received information about the GGP project in their community, as described below. Surveying was conducted in two phases, the first in 2016 and the second in 2017.

In all treatment arms, respondents were read a description of the project, informing them of the project purpose, start year, and cost, and they were shown a photo of the project site.[40] At this point, respondents were asked if they had ever previously heard of the project, who they thought had funded the project, who they thought had managed the funds and run the project, and their amount of uncertainty regarding these answers, providing the measures of prior beliefs about the project reported above.

[39] Some water projects spanned multiple parishes, in which case we sampled the parish the implementing partner deemed to have benefited most. To create the sample, our team worked with the village chairpersons (LC1) to map these villages. We then sampled every *n*th household along a route that circled through the whole village to achieve an even sampling density throughout the village.

[40] In the first phase of surveying, 184 respondents were also assigned to a delayed control condition in which they were not provided with this information until after measuring one of our outcome measures – the likelihood of voting for incumbent local politicians. We do not find significant differences between the delayed control and the baseline treatment conditions, possibly due to the dense information respondents had about these well-known projects in advance of the survey. We pool these respondents with the baseline treatment in our main analysis. The results are robust to dropping them, as indicated in Appendix Table G1.

After this, some respondents were also provided additional information on the donor and/or grantee of the project. In the donor treatment, respondents were told that the funding for the project came from Japan and shown a photo of the Japanese ambassador signing off on a GGP project. In the grantee treatment, respondents were told that a specific NGO was in charge of the project and shown a photo of the NGO's signboard. The full informational treatment combined both the donor and grantee treatment, making clear that the project was neither government-funded nor government-administered. By crafting these informational treatments with regard to a well-known project, we were able to manipulate information about foreign funding and NGO implementation without changing perceptions of the quality of the project.[41]

We are interested in how the informational treatments change the credit that voters give to politicians for the project. We measured credit attribution through a series of survey questions administered after treatment. Individual-level support for politicians was measured via a question asking how likely or unlikely the respondent would be to vote for their current representatives in various levels of government if elections were being held today, with responses coded on a four-point scale ranging from very unlikely to very likely. Respondents were each asked about their support for multiple politicians, with each respondent answering questions about an executive political office with relatively higher oversight capacity (their sub-county chairperson) and a legislative political office with relatively lower oversight capacity

[41] See Appendix Table I1.

(either their district councilor or MP).[42] We randomized across respondents the order in which we asked about different politicians. After the vote choice questions, respondents were directly asked whether they thought the same politicians had taken actions that made sure the project helped people in the community. In the second phase of surveying, we also asked whether respondents thought the project *should* earn politicians votes in the next election.

The variation in informational treatments and oversight capacity employed in this study is mapped out in Figure 4, with darker colors indicating political offices with higher oversight capacity. The figure shows the two sources of variation in a political office's oversight capacity: the location of the project, with oversight capacity lower in Northern Uganda, and the type of office, with executive offices having higher oversight capacity. Following our theoretical framework, we assume actual effort by politicians is not perfectly observed but that citizens are aware of political offices' oversight capacity.[43]

[42] We selected these political offices because their geographic constituencies matched the breadth of the GGP projects, making them plausible project facilitators, and our interviews with implementing partners confirmed them as the most frequently involved politicians.

[43] It is possible that citizens could use proxies other than the ones we use (region and executive vs. legislative office) to gauge an office's oversight capacity. As a result, it is reassuring that our results are broadly similar if we interact politicians' actual involvement with our full information treatment. See Appendix E.

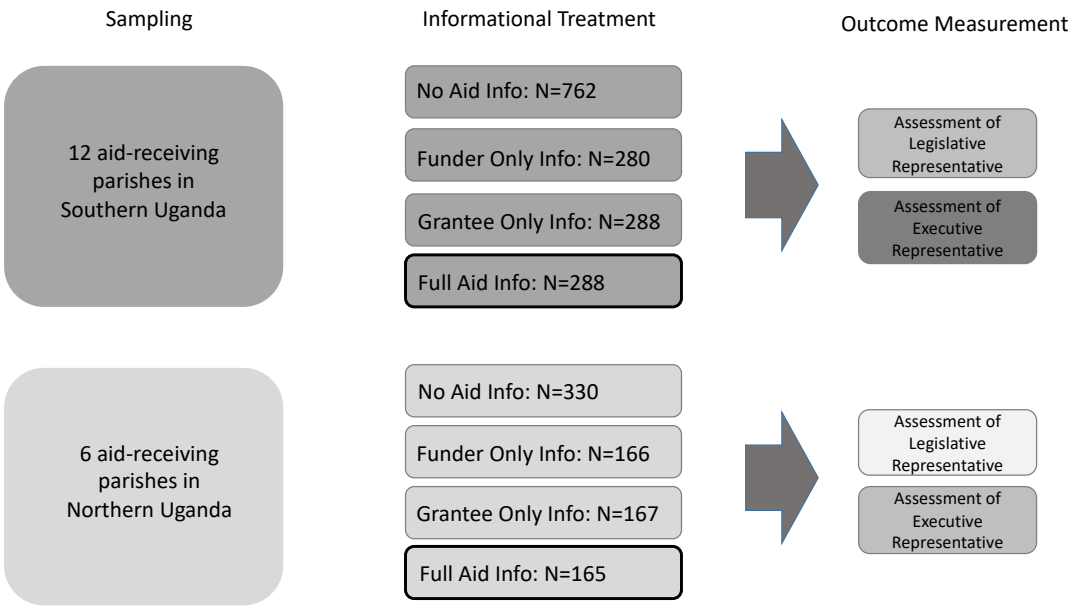

Figure 4. Variation in Informational Treatment and Political Office's Aid Oversight Capacity. Darker colors represent cases with more aid oversight capacity.

Experimental Analysis: Information Effects as Moderated by Aid Oversight Capacity

The variation in the involvement of politicians in aid projects leads us to expect heterogeneity in the effects of correcting misinformation about the sources and administration of projects. As shown above, all of these projects can be considered a success, and the vast majority of citizens believe that they are government-funded and government-administered projects at baseline. As a result, *prior to the informational treatments, a majority of citizens credit politicians for the projects*.[44]

In contexts where politicians are likely to have been significantly involved in bypass aid projects, we do not expect citizens to change their opinions of politicians if they find out the

[44] In the baseline conditions, in response to questions asking if specific politicians took actions to make the project a success, 54% of respondents give credit to at least one of the two politicians about whom they were asked; 45% credit the sub-country chairperson and 39% credit the legislator about whom they were asked (41% for MP, 37% for LC5 councilor).

project is donor-funded and NGO-administered. In contrast, in contexts where politicians are unlikely to have been significantly involved in bypass aid projects, we expect citizens to negatively update their opinions of politicians if they find out the project is donor-funded and NGO-administered. In other words, we hypothesize that citizens will only negatively update their views of politicians when they learn a project is donor-funded and NGO-implemented in contexts where politicians have low oversight capacity.

We test these predictions by examining whether the effect of informing citizens that the local infrastructural projects provided through the GGP funding mechanism are donor-funded and NGO-implemented differentially changes their support for politicians depending on the oversight capacity of their offices. In particular, we draw on the analysis in Table 3, which suggests that political office (in particular, the office of sub-country chairperson) and region (non-Northern regions) have approximately equal positive effects on political oversight, and we generate a three-point scale (0-2) that measures a political office's oversight capacity in a particular location based on these two variables.[45] Each respondent was asked about one politician from an office with relatively higher oversight capacity (the sub-county chairperson) and one politician from an office with relatively lower oversight capacity (either the district councilor or the MP depending on the survey phase), and overall, our observations are well-balanced on relevant demographic characteristics and prior information about projects by aid oversight capacity.[46] We interact the aid oversight variable with our full informational

[45] Specifically, for district councilors and MPs in Northern Uganda, the aid oversight measure equals 0; for district councilors and MPs in non-Northern Uganda or for sub-county chairpersons in Northern Uganda, it equals one; and for sub-county chairpersons in Northern Uganda, it equals two. This is consistent with the estimates in Models 2 and 3 in Table 3, which suggest approximately equal sized effects of each correlate of political involvement. In Appendix Table J1, we break apart the two components of the aid oversight measure.
[46] We provide these statistics in Appendix Table C1.

treatment, comparing responses to outcome questions from those respondents who were informed both that a project was donor funded *and* NGO implemented (i.e., who received the treatment that comprehensively corrected beliefs about government involvement) against all other respondents.[47] We treat respondents' support for each political office as a distinct observation and cluster standard errors at the respondent level.

Specifically, we estimate the effects of the intervention using the following equation:

$$y_{ijk} = \beta_1 Info_i + \beta_2 \pi_{jk} + \beta_3 Info_i * \pi_{jk} + \alpha_{ij} + \epsilon_{ijk}$$

where *i* indexes individual respondents, *j* indexes parishes, and *k* indexes political offices. The oversight capacity of a specific political office in a particular parish is captured by π_{jk}; α_{ij} represents fixed effects for 35 of the 36 strata employed in the randomization (gender by parish); β_3 captures any interactions between the informational treatment and oversight capacity.

In Table 5, we show the average effect of the informational treatment and then the conditional effects by oversight capacity. We begin by examining the effect of the informational treatment on credit attributed to the politician, which is the main intermediary outcome posited to be manipulated by our informational treatments.[48] Model 1a shows an average negative effect of the full information treatment on credit given to politicians (significant at the

[47] We show results from an alternative specification, separately interacting oversight capacity with all three arms of the informational treatment (information on donor funding only, information on non-governmental implementation only and full information) in Appendix Table F1. There are no effects of the lighter informational treatments that do not explicitly indicate the government neither funded nor administered the project. In Appendix Table H1, we show the results when an indicator is used for exposure to any of the three informational treatments.

[48] Alternatively, one could posit that the manipulation influenced perceptions of government corruption insofar as it revealed that the government had a bigger budget vis-à-vis the amount of projects it had provided. However, we find no evidence that the information about the project being donor funded and NGO implemented influenced perceptions of government corruption. We present these results in Appendix Table I1.

90 percent confidence level). But model 1b shows that the average effect hides important heterogeneity by oversight capacity. In instances in which a political office has weak oversight capacity, citizens indicate that incumbent politicians should receive less credit when they are informed a project is donor-funded and NGO-implemented, a negative effect that is significant at the 99 percent confidence level. However, in instances in which a political office has strong oversight capacity, this effect disappears, with the interaction effect significant at the 90 percent confidence level. The attenuation of the negative effect with the increasing oversight capacity of political offices is indicated clearly in the left-hand panel of Figure 3.

In a follow-up question, we asked respondents about the type of action they thought the politician took to make sure the project helped people in the community. We find that political oversight capacity attenuates the negative effect of the bypass aid information on citizens views about whether politicians helped secure project financing and whether they mobilized the community in support of the project.[49] This is consistent with citizens having informed understandings of political oversight capacity vis-à-vis bypass aid projects.

A similar pattern emerges when citizens are asked whether other voters should support the incumbent politician as a result of the project. Model 2a shows an average negative effect (statistically significant at 99 percent confidence level), but model 2b reveals that this varies by oversight capacity. There is a clear negative effect of information that projects are donor-funded and NGO-implemented when politicians are from a political office with weak oversight capacity (statistically significant at the 99 percent confidence level), but the effect loses significance (and the point estimate even becomes positive) in contexts of strong aid oversight

[49] See Appendix D.

capacity, as demonstrated in the middle panel of Figure 3. The effect of the informational treatment is significantly more positive under conditions of stronger aid oversight (at the 99 percent confidence level).

The third set of models in Table 5 shows the effects of the full information treatment on the respondents' reported likelihood of voting for the politician. This question asked respondents about their overall likelihood of supporting the politician, without reference to project.[50] Once again, we see a similar pattern: for politicians in low-capacity offices, the full information treatment reduces respondents' likelihood of saying that they would vote for the politician, but this effect disappears among politicians in high-capacity offices.

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)		(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)		(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)	
	(1a)	(1b)	(2a)	(2b)	(3a)	(3b)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.04**	-0.12***	-0.22***	-0.45***	-0.003	-0.15*
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.05)	(0.09)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment		0.07***		0.26***		0.13**
		(0.02)		(0.07)		(0.06)
Oversight Capacity of Political Office		0.04***		0.02		0.07**
		(0.01)		(0.03)		(0.03)
Baseline Mean	0.43	0.42	2.62	2.44	2.80	2.89
N	4,765	4,765	2,614	2,614	4,341	4,341

Table 5. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with an indicator for the full aid information treatment, a politician-specific measure of oversight capacity, an interaction between the two, and 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (sub-county chairpersons, district councilors, and MPs) with standard errors clustered by respondent. The outcome in column (2) was asked only in the 2017 wave of the survey. The baseline mean row reports the average value across respondents not receiving the full aid info treatment (a columns) and with regard to politicians with low oversight capacity (b columns). *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

[50] The question was also asked before the questions about whether the politician deserved credit for the project and whether the project should be a voting factor for other voters.

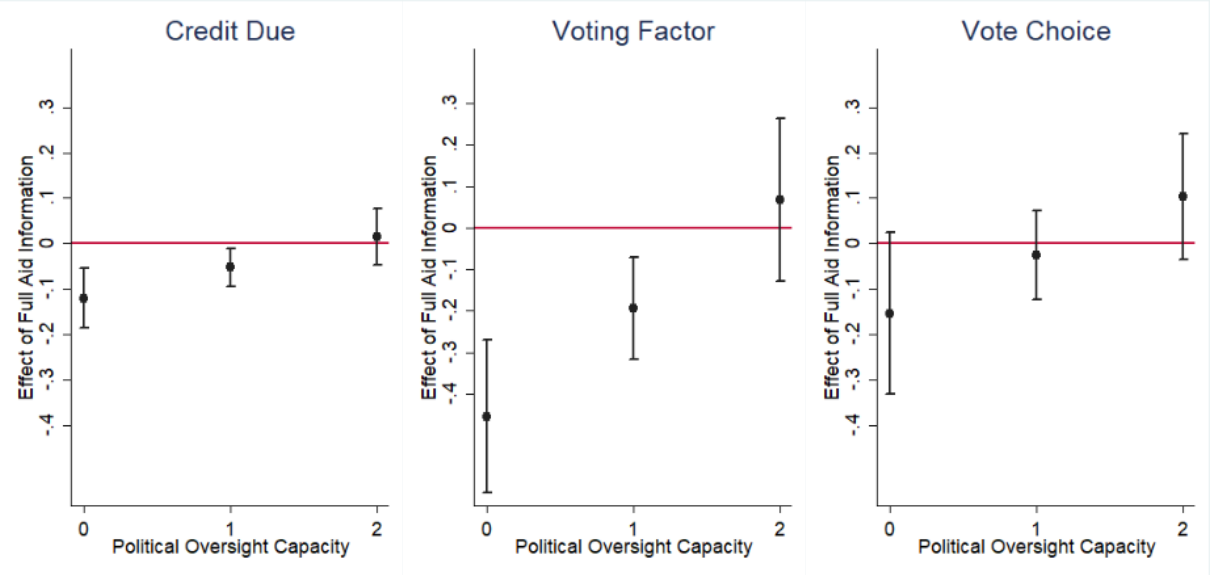

Figure 5. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving by Aid Oversight Capacity. Based on coefficient estimates reported in Table 5.

The effects in Table 5 may be depressed by the fact that a portion of respondents had correct prior beliefs about the funder and/or implementer of the projects in our study (as seen in Table 4) and are therefore unlikely to update their beliefs and attitudes based on the information we provide. Table 6 re-runs the same models found in Table 5, dropping respondents who knew either the funder or the implementer of the project in advance of our informational intervention. The effects estimated in Table 6 are also displayed graphically in Figure 4. As expected, when looking only at the set of respondents with incorrect or uncertain priors, we estimate larger negative effects of the informational intervention on credit given to and support for politicians whose offices have weak oversight capacity. Correspondingly, we estimate a larger positive interaction effect between the informational intervention and the oversight capacity of offices.

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)	(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)	(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.15***	-0.56***	-0.22**
	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.10)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.09***	0.36***	0.18**
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Oversight Capacity of Political Office	0.04***	-0.01	0.03
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Baseline Mean	0.44	2.49	2.96
N	3,765	2,133	3,423

Table 6. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving by Uncertain or Incorrect Priors. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with an indicator for the full aid information treatment, a politician-specific measure of oversight capacity, an interaction between the two, and 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (sub-county chairpersons, district councilors, and MPs) with standard errors clustered by respondent. The outcome in column (2) was asked only in the 2017 wave of the survey. The baseline mean row reports the average value across respondents not receiving the full aid info treatment and with regard to politicians with low oversight capacity. *** - p < 0.01; ** - p < 0.05; * - p < 0.10.

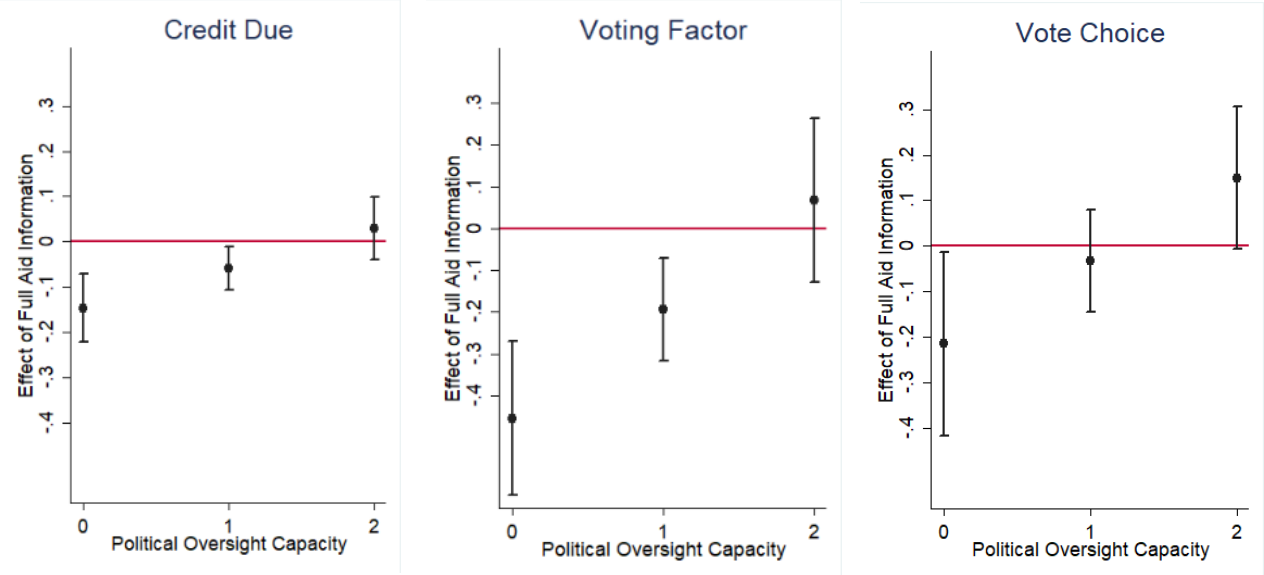

Figure 6. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving by Aid Oversight Capacity (Respondents with Uncertain or Incorrect Priors). Based on coefficient estimates reported in Table 6.

Together, these results suggest that citizens update differently about politicians depending on characteristics of their offices that, as shown above, predict their likelihood of

involvement in aid projects. We argue that, even if voters do not know who funds, implements, or is involved with particular projects, they have an understanding of the overall oversight capacity of politicians with regards to aid projects. As a result, information that projects are actually donor-funded and NGO-implemented has different effects on credit giving depending on context: citizens only penalize politicians if their office is unlikely to have been involved.

In the appendices, we provide evidence against plausible alternative explanations for these patterns. As discussed earlier, respondents had similar levels of prior information about projects across the different regions of Uganda; as a result, we can rule out that respondents outside Northern Uganda are less influenced by aid information because they are better informed and/or better educated.[51] We also show that respondents do not update more negatively about politicians when they are project beneficiaries.[52] Finally, we show our results cannot be explained by voters differentially crediting politicians based on whether they share a party identification with the politician or whether the politician is a member of the governing party.[53]

Cross-National Evidence on Variation in Credit for International Aid by State Capacity and Citizen Information

Our experimental results provide evidence that respondents' information and politicians' oversight capacity interact to influence whether respondents give politicians credit for successful aid projects. In addition, our analysis of politicians' engagement with aid projects

[51] See Appendix Table C1.
[52] See Appendix Table K1.
[53] See Appendix Tables K2 and K3.

in Uganda suggests the types of circumstances under which politicians are likely to have oversight capacity. In Uganda, the type of political office matters, with politicians in local executive office having more oversight capacity, but so does the strength of state administration, as proxied by region. In this final section of the paper, we move beyond the Ugandan case, considering how information and oversight capacity interact to affect how citizens allocate credit for aid projects across a wider range of projects and countries. While the Ugandan experiment focused on the heterogenous effects of information by aid oversight capacity conditional on an aid project being present, the cross-national analysis also includes communities without recent aid projects. In doing so, it moves beyond the experimental analysis and considers how proximity to aid projects affects credit attribution conditional on both citizens' information and the state's oversight capacity in a triple interaction. Due to data availability, we focus on an inverted version of the credit attribution variable used above: we look at the amount of credit that people give to international donors and NGOs in different contexts.[54] Our predictions about the effects of aid projects on credit attribution under different combinations of citizen information and state oversight capacity are summarized in Table 7, which parallels Table 2 above.[55]

[54] While it is not necessarily the case that giving credit to international donors and NGOs implies taking away credit from local politicians in a one-to-one ratio, we do expect there to be some trade-off in credit giving that will be reflected in how people answer this question.

[55] The predictions assume that projects are – on average – high quality.

	Low Aid Oversight Capacity	High Aid Oversight Capacity
Low Citizen Information	Null Effect of Aid Projects on Credit to Donors/NGOs	Null Effect of Aid Projects on Credit to Donors/NGOs
High Citizen Information	Positive Effect of Aid Projects on Credit to Donors/NGOs	Null Effect of Aid Projects on Credit to Donors/NGOs

Table 7. Expectations for the Effect of Aid Projects on Credit Given to Donors/NGOs.

The analysis in this section requires nationally representative survey data including questions about credit-giving for international aid projects *and* comprehensive information on the location of aid projects within countries during the corresponding period. There are four countries for which both types of data are available: Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda. For each of these countries, we measure credit-giving for aid projects by considering citizens' responses to a question included in the Afrobarometer survey round conducted in each country in 2008 about how much international donors and NGOs help their country on a 1-4 scale. We view this as the flip side of the question we asked in Uganda about whether particular politicians took actions to make sure aid projects helped people, assuming some rivalry in how credit is bestowed among actors for projects with an observed level of success. The inverted question is necessary because existing public opinion surveys do not contain questions equivalent to the ones we asked citizens in Uganda about whether politicians' deserve credit for ensuring aid projects help people in the community. The inverted question also has the advantage of allowing us to make comparisons across countries and aid projects where different levels of political offices are likely to be relevant for overseeing aid projects.

We measure citizens' information levels using the Afrobarometer's question about how interested the respondent would say they are in public affairs on a 4-point scale.[56] Our expectation is that citizens with greater interest in political affairs are more likely to know the donor and implementer of aid projects. In contrast to other possible measures of information included in the Afrobarometer survey, the measure correlates well with information sources and political knowledge in diverse contexts. The general nature of this question allows us to make comparisons across contexts in which respondents obtain information about local government from different sources and live under political institutions that make different political knowledge salient.[57] In the appendix, we show our results are similar if we instead use radio news exposure as our proxy for information.[58]

We measure aid oversight capacity by measuring whether the respondents' community is closer or further than the median distance from the capital city. This measure builds on a long line of research that suggests state capacity in Africa radiates out from the capital city[59], and it has the advantage of capturing variation within each of the four countries in our sample. In the

[56] If necessary, enumerators added "You know, in politics and government" to define public affairs. The available responses were "Very interested, somewhat interested, not very interested or not at all interested."
[57] Responses to the political interest question correlate positively with access to newspapers, access to radio and knowledge of the local Member of Parliament's name in both urban and rural areas in our sample. In contrast, radio access and newspaper access do not correlate positively with knowing the local Member of Parliament's name in rural areas. Respondents in Nigeria and Senegal know their MPs' names at much lower rates than in Uganda and Malawi, likely due to differences in political institutions. See Appendix Tables L1 and L2.
[58] See Table N1 and Figure N1. This follows Conroy-Krutz's 2018 study of media exposure and information in Uganda. We note that both of our informational measures are broader than the stimulus in the experiment and may convey information about both the project and political offices' oversight capacity. However, if media exposure proxies for information about state capacity (rather than the actors involved in projects), we would expect slightly different patterns in the interactions, with lower support for donors and NGOs in contexts of high information and high state capacity.
[59] Herbst 2000; Brinkerhoff, Wetterberg, and Wibbels 2018; Roessler and Ohls 2018.

appendix, we show our results are similar if we instead use recent conflict exposure as a proxy for weak state capacity.[60]

We combine this survey data with information on the location of recent foreign aid projects in the country, available from government Aid Information Management Systems that have been georeferenced by AidData. The Aid Information Management Systems for Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda provide data on the location of aid projects from dozens of donors during the period prior to 2008. Although their donor coverage is not complete, these datasets provide the most comprehensive publicly available data on aid project locations for the Afrobarometer countries. The data sets include a wide range of projects, including traditional aid and bypass aid. We measure exposure to recent aid projects by considering whether respondents live within a 5- (or 10-) kilometer radius of an aid project initiated during the previous two years. We are able to use narrower bands to define aid exposure than other research on the spatial effects of aid because we consider exposure to aid from all donors included in country's Aid Information Management Systems: across the four countries, 47 percent of respondents live within 10 kilometers of a new aid project and 40 percent of respondents live within 5 kilometers of a new aid project.[61]

We estimate the effects of the presence of aid projects using the following equation:

[60] We measure conflict-exposure in the previous five years using PRIO's Conflict Site Data. See Table N1 and Figure N1. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

[61] Many existing studies use 50 kilometer radius from different types of aid to measure exposure; see Briggs 2019; Knutsen and Kotsadam 2020. For some types of aid, awareness of and benefits from the project will not radiate this far. In our data, 100 percent of respondents in Malawi and 94 percent of respondents in Uganda live within 50 kilometers of an aid project initiated in the previous two years.

$$y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta_1 Aid_j + \beta_2 Informed_i + \beta_3 \pi_j + \beta_4 Aid_j * Informed_i + \beta_5 Aid_j * \pi_j + \beta_6 Informed_i * \pi_j + \beta_7 Aid_j * Informed_i * \pi_j + \boldsymbol{X}\beta + \alpha_k + \epsilon_{ijk}$$

where *i* indexes individual respondents and *j* indexes the respondent's town or village. Aid_j indicates whether a new aid project has been started within a certain number of kilometers of a respondent's town or village in the previous two years, $Informed_i$ indicates whether the respondent reports being very interested in public affairs, and π_j is a proxy for government oversight of aid projects. The model also includes interactions between each of these variables and a triple interaction to determine whether the effect of aid projects on the credit assigned to international donors and NGOs depends on both government oversight and respondent information. $\boldsymbol{X}$ is a vector of individual-level control variables, including rural residency, age and the respondent's level of education**.**

In each plot of Figure 7, we show the marginal effects of being near an aid project on the credit given to international donors and NGOs by different combinations of state capacity and citizen information. The right plot shows the marginal effects of being within 5 kilometers of an aid project started in the past two years, and the left plot shows the marginal effects of being within 10 kilometers of such a project.[62] Mirroring the results above, where high-information in relation to a low-capacity political office results in reduced credit to local politicians, we find the largest marginal effect of aid on credit to international actors – and the only statistically significant marginal effect – when the government has low capacity and voters are informed. In instances in which either the government has high capacity or voters are

[62] See Appendix Table M1 for the original coefficients.

uninformed, the relationship between the presence of foreign aid projects and credit going to international donors and NGOs is positive but not statistically distinguishable from zero. These results can be viewed as the converse of our experimental results: governments get credit for projects unless they are low capacity and voters are informed.

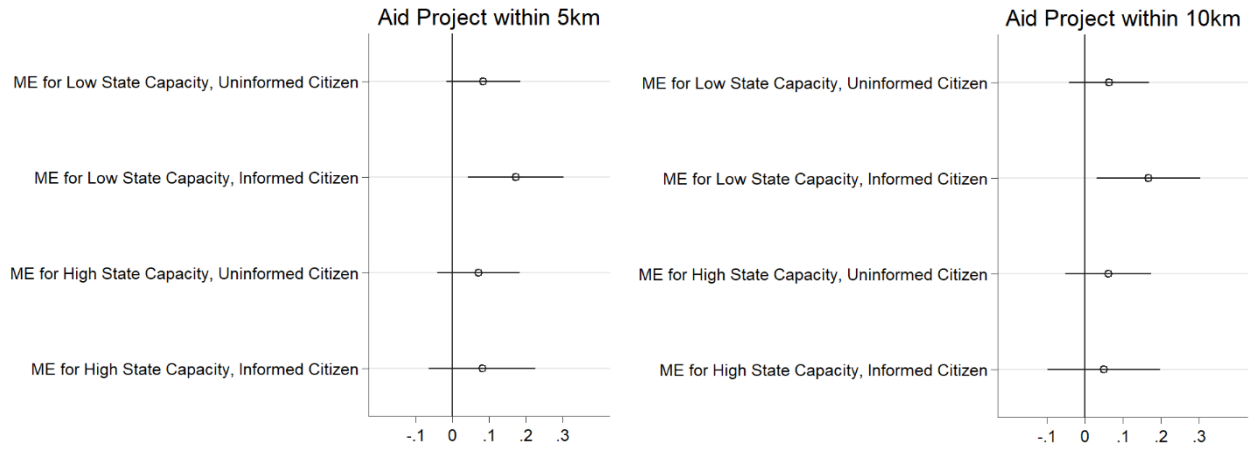

Figure 7. Marginal Effects of Presence of Aid Project on Credit to International NGOs and Donors by State Capacity and Citizen Information. Based on coefficient estimates reported in columns 1 and 2 of Appendix Table M1. Coefficients come from OLS regressions of credit to international actors on indicators for state capacity and citizen information and controls for education, whether or not the respondent is in a rural area, whether or not the respondent falls into the 17-35 age range, and whether or not the respondent falls into the 64+ age range and country fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the enumeration area.

Conclusion

Does international aid lead to accountability problems? In aid-receiving countries, voters often have low information about who is funding and implementing development projects in their vicinity. Well-executed international aid projects might therefore inflate support for incumbents because of erroneous credit giving. On the other hand, in many cases, politicians may have played a role in bringing a project to fruition or in its successful operation, even if the project is nominally a non-government project. In such cases, credit giving is

appropriate. As we have demonstrated in the Ugandan case, many politicians have significant involvement in providing aid projects, even projects that ostensibly "bypass" the government in the sense that they are administered by NGOs. In these instances where politicians are involved in such projects, we would expect fully-informed, rational voters to use these projects to update about the quality of their politicians.

Our experimental evidence from Uganda supports this hypothesis. In instances in which politicians hold political offices that have low involvement in the provision of aid projects, voters reduce the amount of credit attributed to incumbent politicians and their support for them when they learn the projects are internationally funded and NGO implemented. But in instances in which politicians hold political offices with high capacity for involvement in the projects, voters do not reduce credit or support for politicians when they receive the same information. These patterns support a theoretical model where information is differentially processed based on expectations about what politicians can do and are doing.

Our main analysis was conducted using evidence from Uganda, which receives particularly high levels of (bypass) aid and which has significant political decentralization. In this type of setting, local politicians may be particularly likely to have significant involvement in donor-funded and NGO-implemented projects. Still, we believe the paper's claim – that politicians at some level of government play critical roles in ensuring the success (or failure) of aid projects – is likely to hold across aid-dependent countries, with variation in the level of political representative that is involved depending on political context and aid-project type. In our cross-national analysis, we examined how information and oversight capacity condition credit giving to donors and NGOs in countries that were more centralized (Malawi, Senegal) and

less aid dependent (Nigeria), finding broadly consistent results in these contexts. This suggests the dynamic is not specific to the Ugandan context, the specific foreign aid donor, or the particular type of aid projects around which we base the Ugandan study.[63]

Our framework implies that misinformation about the organizations formally responsible for aid projects has different implications for accountability depending on a political office's aid oversight capacity. Information that projects are donor funded or NGO implemented doesn't necessarily mean that these projects are uninformative signals of a politician's quality; their information content depends on the aid oversight capacity of the politician's office. This underscores the importance, in studying the relationship between service delivery and accountability, of further examining how particular information interacts with the capacity of different political offices to influence citizen perceptions of different kinds of projects.[64] Our results imply more optimistic conclusions about the effects of aid on democratic accountability than the conventional wisdom has allowed: citizens respond to new information in ways where they update their priors based on important contextual information.

[63] The parallels between our cross-country results and the Uganda results might be taken as an example, like Briggs 2020, that many cases exist where results from a study of a single donor generalize well to other donors.
[64] For related work that studies variation in the relationship between service delivery and accountability, see Batley and Mcloughlin 2015 and Bauhr and Carlitz 2020.

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Supplementary Material

Foreign Aid and Incumbent Support: How Politician's Aid Oversight Capacity and Voter Information Condition Credit Giving

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Replication data for the analyses in the main text and these online appendices is available through the World Politics Dataverse site at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/UIJRGM.

Appendix A. Project Involvement by Politician Partisanship

Using the data from our implementing partner survey conducted in all 18 research site locations, we can compare the involvement of politicians in the GGP projects based on whether they are affiliated with the NRM or other political parties. These results are presented in Figure A1. We do not find consistent differences in involvement by politicians' political affiliation.

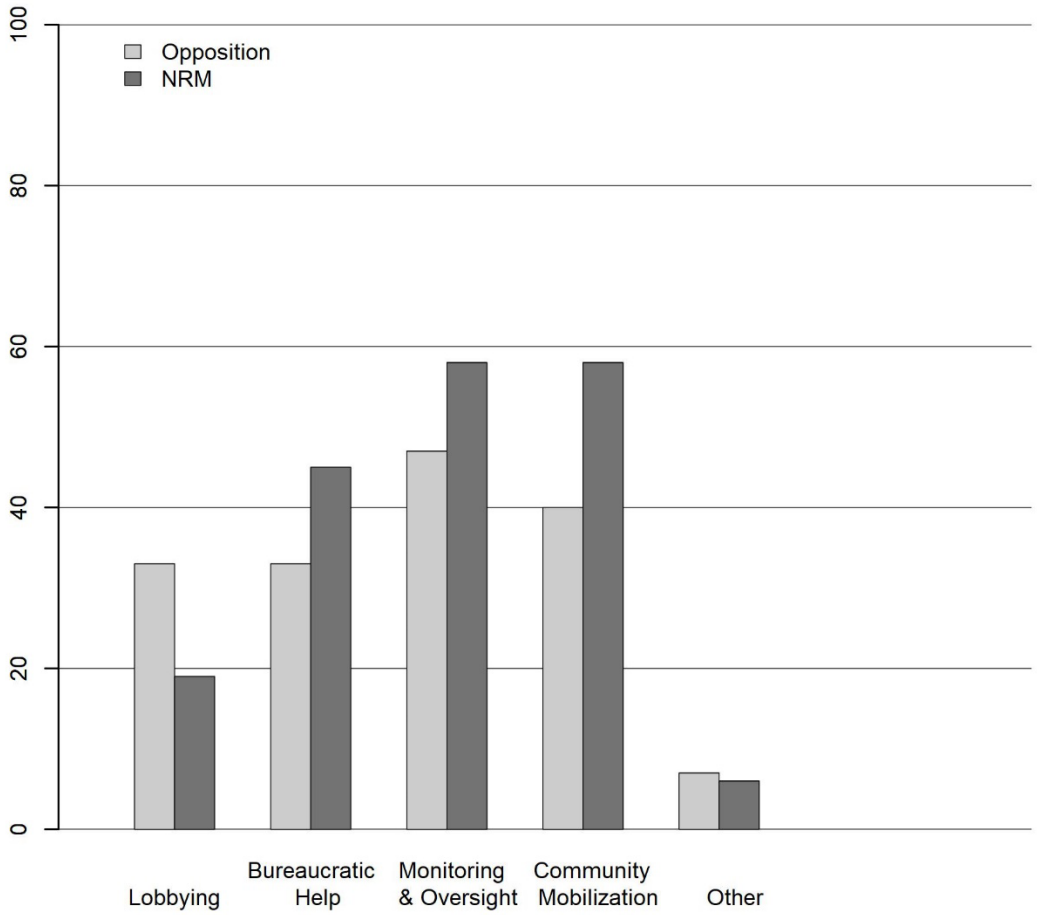

Figure A1. Involvement in GGP Aid Projects by Politicians' Political Affiliation. Data from implementing partner survey and electoral records.

We also conducted interviews with 10 sub-county chairpersons in GGP communities, collecting information on their involvement with government and aid-funded projects in their communities.[1] We asked each sub-county chairperson about the biggest projects the local government had begun in their sub-county in the past five years and then separately about the biggest projects NGOs had begun, emphasizing in both cases that they should list all projects begun, not just those completed, and, if there were more than five, to list the biggest five. Across 10 sub-counties, we collected data on 82 projects. We then gathered further information on the financing and implementation of the projects, allowing us to divide the

[1] All of these sub-counties were in non-Northern Uganda.

listed projects into those funded and implemented by the government ("government projects": 50% of listed projects), funded by the government but implemented by NGOs ("outsourced projects": 20% of listed projects), funded by donors and implemented by the government ("traditional aid": 9% of listed projects) and funded by donors and implemented by NGOs ("bypass aid": 22% of listed projects).

We also asked the sub-county chairpersons whether they were involved in each project and how specifically they were involved. In general, the data on sub-county chairpersons' self-reported involvement in GGP projects corresponds well with the implementing partners' reports of sub-county chairpersons' involvement: they infrequently report lobbying for the project (10%) but the majority report providing oversight of the project (80%) and assisting in mobilizing community involvement (70%). The exception is the result on bureaucratic help: None of the LC3s reported providing bureaucratic assistance, although half of implementing partners reported that LC3s did provide this type of help, suggesting different interpretations of what bureaucratic assistance entails.[2]

The data collected from sub-county chairpersons allows us to compare how GGP projects compare to other types of projects in these districts, with a particular interest in how they compare to other bypass aid projects. These comparisons are displayed in Figure A2. In general, GGP projects appear very representative of bypass aid projects more generally in terms of the extent of political involvement, with sub-county chairpersons monitoring these projects through various institutions and mobilizing community involvement in the projects. In general, sub-county chairpersons appear to have similar levels of involvement in overseeing GGP projects, other bypass aid projects, traditional aid projects and government projects that are outsourced to NGOs, reporting some kind of involvement in about two-thirds of these projects.

[2] One possibility is that implementing partners viewed LC3s as assisting because bureaucratic paperwork went through their offices, whereas LC3s viewed assistance as involving preferential treatment.

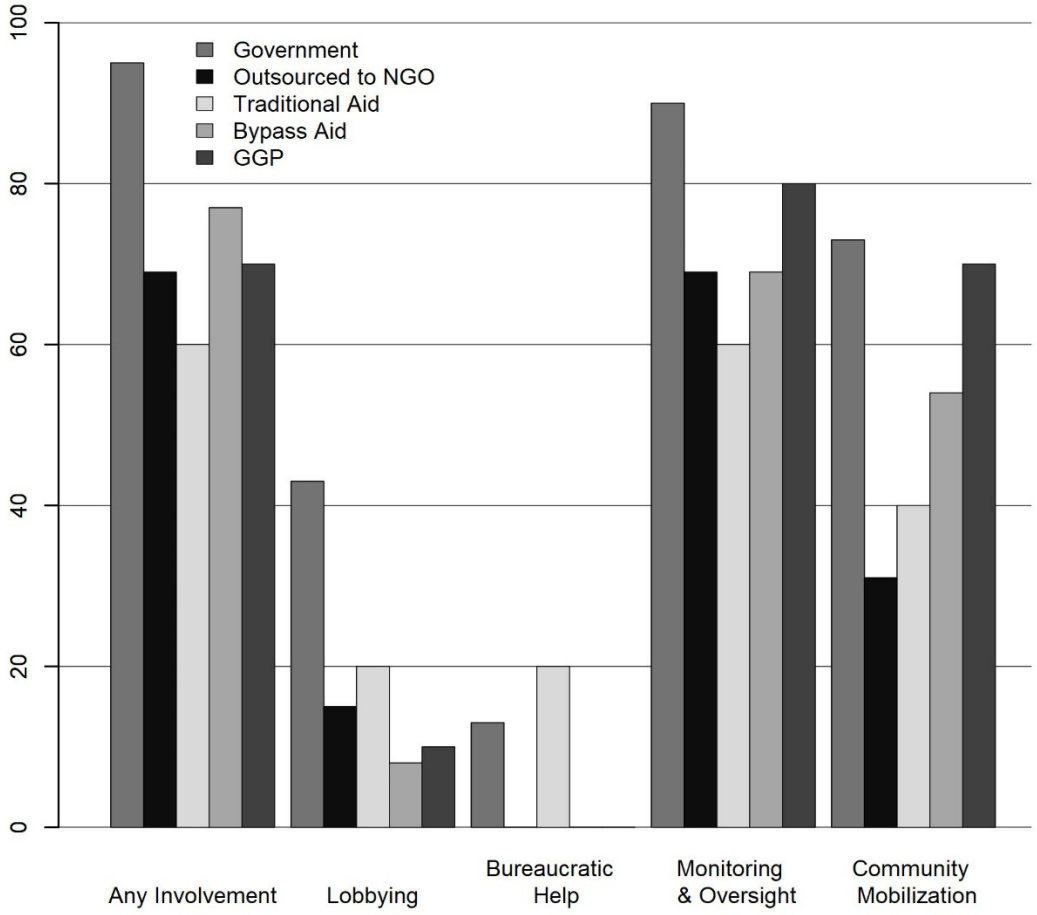

Figure A2. Sub-country Chairperson Involvement in Various Types of Projects in their Sub-counties. Data from survey of subcounty chairpersons outside Northern Uganda only.

Appendix B. Sample Characteristics Compared to Ugandan National Census

Attribute	Census 2014	Study Sample
Age	20+ pop.	20+ pop.
20-34	54%	48%
35-49	27%	29%
50-64	12%	15%
65+	7%	8%
Occupation	14+ working pop.	18+ working pop.
Small-scale farmer	59%	63%
Large-scale farmer	4%	2%
Craft-person	7%	5%
Ethnicity	All	18+
Baganda	17%	6%
Banyakole	10%	10%
Basoga	9%	13%
Bakiga	7%	9%
Iteso	7%	1%
Langi	6%	15%
Bagisu	5%	6%
Acholi	4%	17%
Lugbara	3%	0%
Religion	All	18+ pop.
Catholic	39%	43%
Protestant	45%	45%
Muslim	14%	10%

Table B1. Ugandan Population versus Study Sample. Census Statistics compiled from Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2016), *The National Population and Housing Census 2014 – Main Report,* Kampala, Uganda. Available here: https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/03_20182014_National_Census_Main_Report.pdf

Appendix C. Summary Statistics by Treatment Condition and Aid Oversight Capacity

Variables	Control		Donor Information		Grantee Information		Full Information	
	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd
Small-scale farmer	0.6	0.49	0.6	0.49	0.61	0.49	0.6	0.49
Large-scale farmer	0.015	0.12	0.017	0.13	0.019	0.14	0.021	0.14
Craftsperson	0.045	0.21	0.044	0.21	0.043	0.20	0.055	0.23
Age	38	16.10	36	15.20	38	15.64	39	15.48
Female	0.51	0.50	0.48	0.50	0.49	0.50	0.51	0.50
Completed S4	0.23	0.42	0.23	0.42	0.22	0.41	0.2	0.40
Completed P7	0.51	0.50	0.5	0.50	0.44	0.50	0.49	0.50
HH NRM affiliation	0.5	0.50	0.49	0.50	0.46	0.50	0.48	0.50
Correct prior: one	0.2	0.40	0.22	0.41	0.22	0.41	0.22	0.41
Correct prior: both	0.029	0.17	0.016	0.12	0.042	0.20	0.03	0.17
NRM politician	0.79	0.40	0.78	0.41	0.77	0.42	0.78	0.42
HH gone to project	0.56	0.50	0.57	0.49	0.54	0.50	0.56	0.50
Project quality	3.4	0.72	3.5	0.73	3.5	0.62	3.5	0.70
Heard of project	0.61	0.49	0.58	0.49	0.63	0.48	0.58	0.49
Heard of imp partner	0.58	0.49	0.58	0.49	0.6	0.49	0.64	0.48

Note: Variables below line are measured post-treatment.

	Weak Oversight		Intermediate Oversight		High Oversight	
	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd
Small-scale farmer	0.65	0.48	0.6	0.49	0.58	0.49
Large-scale farmer	0.011	0.10	0.018	0.13	0.019	0.14
Craftsperson	0.06	0.24	0.046	0.21	0.041	0.20
Age	37	14.28	38	15.74	38	16.38
Female	0.5	0.50	0.5	0.50	0.5	0.50
Completed S4	0.22	0.42	0.23	0.42	0.22	0.41
Completed P7	0.51	0.50	0.49	0.50	0.47	0.50
HH NRM affiliation	0.35	0.48	0.49	0.50	0.55	0.50
Correct prior: one	0.22	0.41	0.21	0.41	0.21	0.41
Correct prior: both	0.015	0.12	0.03	0.17	0.033	0.18
NRM politician	0.65	0.48	0.73	0.44	0.92	0.28
HH gone to project	0.67	0.47	0.56	0.50	0.5	0.50
Project quality	3.6	0.65	3.5	0.70	3.4	0.72
Heard of project	0.58	0.49	0.6	0.49	0.62	0.49
Heard of imp partner	0.81	0.39	0.6	0.49	0.5	0.50

Note: Variables below line are measured post-treatment.

Table C1. Summary Statistics by Treatment Conditions and Aid Oversight Capacity.

Appendix D. Heterogenous Effects on Beliefs about Type of Involvement

	(1) Lobbied for Project/ Helped Secure Financing (0/1)	(2) Bureaucratic Approvals and Support (0/1)	(3) Monitored Project (0/1)	(4) Mobilized Community (0/1)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.07**	0.02	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.04*	-0.02	-0.00	0.03*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Oversight Capacity	-0.09***	0.02	0.05***	0.08***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
N	4,765	4,765	4,765	4765

Table D1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects by Oversight Capacity. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondents' views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix E. Heterogenous Effects by Politicians' Actual Levels of Involvement in Project

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)	(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)	(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.10***	-0.37***	-0.05
	(0.03)	(0.09)	(0.07)
Politician's Involvement X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.03**	0.09**	0.02
	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Politician's Involvement	0.01	-0.04**	-0.02
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
N	4,765	2,614	4,341

Table E1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects by Politician's Involvement. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondents' views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

In our theoretical framework, actual effort by politicians is not perfectly observed, and so citizens use correlates of political office's oversight capacity to predict actual involvement. However, given that citizens could use proxies other than the ones we use (region and executive vs. legislative office) to gauge office's oversight capacity, it is reassuring that our results are broadly similar if we interact politicians' actual involvement with our full information treatment.

Appendix F. Results with All Interactions

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)		(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)		(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)	
	(1a)	(1b)	(2a)	(2b)	(3a)	(3b)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.05*	-0.10***	-0.19***	-0.42***	0.02	-0.10
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.05)	(0.10)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment		0.05*		0.26***		0.11
		(0.03)		(0.08)		(0.07)
Donor Info Treatment	-0.005	0.04	0.09	0.10	0.08	0.07
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.10)
Oversight Capacity X Donor Treatment		-0.04		-0.01		0.003
		(0.03)		(0.08)		(0.07)
Implementing Partner Info Treatment	-0.01	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.13
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.09)
Oversight Capacity X Implementing Treatment		-0.03		0.01		-0.09
		(0.03)		(0.08)		(0.07)
Oversight Capacity of Political Office		0.06***		0.02		0.10**
		(0.02)		(0.05)		(0.04)
N	4,765	4,765	2,614	2,614	4,341	4,341

Table F1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with indicators for donor information, grantee information, and full aid information, each interacted with a variable measuring politician's oversight capacity, a politician-specific measure of oversight capacity, and 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (LC3s and MPs or LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix G. Effects on Electoral Support Dropping Delayed Control Treatment

	(1) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.16*
	(0.09)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.13**
	(0.06)
Oversight Capacity	0.07**
	(0.03)
N	4,000

Table G1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects of Full Aid Information on Electoral Support Dropping Delayed Control Condition. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix H. Effects of Any Information

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)	(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)	(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Any Aid Info Treatment	-0.01	-0.10	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Oversight Capacity X Any Aid Info Treatment	-0.01	0.08	0.005
	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Oversight Capacity	0.06***	0.02	0.10**
	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.04)
N	4,765	2,614	4,341

Table H1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects of Any Aid Information on Credit-Giving. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix I. Ruling Out Alternative Mechanisms: No Effects on Perceptions of Project Quality or Government Corruption

	(1) Project Quality (1-4)	(2) Corruption in Local Government (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.02	-0.01
	(0.06)	(0.08)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.06	0.03
	(0.07)	(0.10)
Oversight Capacity	-0.19	-0.07
	(0.12)	(0.18)
N	2,356	2,242

Table I1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Perceptions of Project Quality and Local Government Corruption. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 34 random-assignment strata fixed effects and robust standard errors. Observations are at the respondent-level, and as a result, oversight capacity varies only by region in these models. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix J. Components of Aid Oversight Capacity

Two components of political offices influence their known oversight capacity in our model: executive offices and offices outside of Northern Uganda have greater capacity for involvement than legislative offices and offices in Northern Uganda. In Table J1, we break apart the aid oversight capacity variable into its four constituent categories, and for each one, show the effect of providing information about the donor and implementer responsible for projects. Across all three outcomes, the effects of aid information on support for politicians holding executive office (sub-county chairpersons) in the South of Uganda are consistently less negative/more positive than the effects of aid information on politicians holding legislative offices (MPs or LC5 councilors) in Northern Uganda. However, the relative importance of the two dimensions of aid oversight capacity on support for politicians differs by outcome; executive office matters in interaction with region for the amount of credit given to politicians and respondents' beliefs about whether others should vote for politicians.

	Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)		Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)		Likelihood of voting for politician	
Full Aid Info Treatment	(1) North	(2) South	(3) North	(4) South	(5) North	(6) South
DV = Support for Sub-County Chairperson	-0.10**	0.03	-0.39***	0.13	-0.14	0.07
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.07)
	N=827	N=1,556	N=800	N=506	N=687	N=1,499
DV = Support for District Councilor or MP	-0.10**	-0.05	-0.42***	0.03	-0.23**	0.10
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.07)
	N=827	N=1,555	N=800	N=508	N=646	N=1,509

Table J1. Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving by Geographic and Office-Specific Political Capacity. Each cell indicates the effect estimated from a different OLS regression model. The models include an indicator for the full aid information treatment and strata fixed effects, with robust standard errors calculated. Observations are at the respondent level. The outcome in models (3) and (4) was asked only in the 2017 wave of the survey. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix K. Heterogenous Effects by Correlates of Political Capacity

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)	(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)	(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.05	-0.15	-0.006
	(0.03)	(0.10)	(0.08)
Project Beneficiary X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.01	-0.12	0.008
	(0.04)	(0.13)	(0.10)
Project Beneficiary	-0.02	0.10*	0.006
	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.04)
N	4,739	2,609	4,319

Table K1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects by Project Beneficiary. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)	(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)	(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.06**	-0.23***	-0.04
	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.06)
NRM Co-Partisanship X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.03	0.02	0.11
	(0.04)	(0.14)	(0.09)
NRM Co-Partisanship	0.02	0.11	0.13***
	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.05)
N	4,701	2,592	4,292

Table K2. Heterogenous Treatment Effects by NRM Co-Partisanship. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. Co-partisanship is an indicator variable equal to one if both the respondent and the politician are affiliated with the NRM. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

	(1) Politician deserves credit for project (0/1)	(2) Others should vote for politician because of project (1-4)	(3) Likelihood of voting for politician (1-4)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.09**	-0.30***	-0.16*
	(0.04)	(0.09)	(0.09)
NRM Politician X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.06	0.11	0.20**
	(0.04)	(0.10)	(0.10)
NRM Politician	0.01	-0.06	-0.20***
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.05)
N	4,765	2,614	4,341

Table K3. Heterogenous Treatment Effects by NRM Politician. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (LC3s, MPs, LC5 councilors), with standard errors clustered by respondent. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix L. Correlates of Political Interest in Urban and Rural Areas

	Political Interest (1-4)	Radio as news source (0-4)	Television as news source (0-4)	Newspaper as news source (0-4)	Can correctly name local MP (0/1)
Political Interest	1.000				
Radio as news source	0.145	1.000			
Television as news source	0.111	0.323	1.000		
Newspaper as news source	0.199	0.269	0.413	1.000	
Can correctly name local MP	0.130	0.102	-0.099	0.102	1.000

Table L1. Correlation between Political Interest, News Sources, and Information about Local Politics in Urban Areas. Source: Afrobarometer Round 4.

	Political Interest (1-4)	Radio as news source (0-4)	Television as news source (0-4)	Newspaper as news source (0-4)	Can correctly name local MP (0/1)
Political Interest	1.000				
Radio as news source	0.181	1.000			
Television as news source	0.058	0.221	1.000		
Newspaper as news source	0.145	0.181	0.464	1.000	
Can correctly name local MP	0.096	0.026	-0.245	-0.001	1.000

Table L2. Correlation between Political Interest, News Sources, and Information about Local Politics in Rural Areas. Source: Afrobarometer Round 4.

Appendix M. Credit Giving to International Donors and NGOs

	(1) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)	(2) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)	(3) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)	(4) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)
Aid Project	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.05
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
High State Capacity	-0.15***	-0.15***	-0.14***	-0.14***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Informed Citizen	0.19***	0.17***	0.19***	0.18***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)
High State Capacity	0.01	0.03	-0.02	-0.00
x Informed Citizen	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.09)
Aid Project X High	-0.01	-0.00	-0.03	-0.02
State Capacity	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Aid Project X	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.11
Informed Citizen	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.08)
High State Capacity	-0.08	-0.11	-0.08	-0.10
x Aid Project X	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Informed				
Aid Project Effect	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.05
when Low State	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Capacity,				
Uninformed Citizen				
Aid Project Effect	0.17***	0.17**	0.15**	0.16**
when Low State	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Capacity, Informed				
Citizen				
Aid Project Effect	0.07	0.06	0.02	0.03
when High State	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Capacity , Unformed				
Citizen				
Aid Project Effect	0.08	0.05	0.04	0.04
when High State	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Capacity, Informed				
Citizen				
Distance from Aid Project Used	5km	10km	5km	10km
Demographic Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ethnic Group Fixed Effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
N	4,612	4,612	4,481	4.481

Table M1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving to International Donors and NGOs. OLS regressions with a control for education; indicators for whether or not the respondent is in a rural area, whether or not the respondent falls into the 17-35 age range, and whether or not the respondent falls into the 64+ age range; country fixed effects; and ethnic group fixed effects (in columns 3 and 4). Standard errors clustered at the enumeration area in parentheses. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

Appendix N. Credit Giving to International Donors and NGOs: Alternative Measures of Information and State Capacity

	(1) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)	(2) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)	(3) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)	(4) How much international donors and NGOs help country (1-4)
Aid Project	-0.14	-0.20	0.22***	0.19
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.08)	(0.08)
High State Capacity	-0.06	-0.08	-0.01	-0.03
	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Informed Citizen	0.08	0.04	0.14	0.11
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)
High State Capacity	-0.08	-0.06	0.06	0.08
x Informed Citizen	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Aid Project X High	0.23	0.22	-0.16*	-0.13
State Capacity	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Aid Project X	0.27	0.32*	0.18	0.24
Informed Citizen	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.16)
High State Capacity	-0.30	-0.29	-0.13	-0.21
x Aid Project X	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Informed				
Aid Project Effect	-0.14	-0.20	0.22***	0.19**
when Low State	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Capacity,				
Uninformed Citizen				
Aid Project Effect	0.13***	0.12**	0.40***	0.43***
when Low State	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Capacity, Informed				
Citizen				
Aid Project Effect	0.09	0.02	0.06	0.06
when High State	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Capacity ,				
Uninformed Citizen				
Aid Project Effect	0.06	0.05	0.11**	0.10*
when High State	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Capacity, Informed				
Citizen				
Distance from Aid	5km	10km	5km	10km
Project Used				
Demographic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls				
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Robustness Measure	Informed=Radio	Informed=Radio	Capacity=No Conflict	Capacity=No Conflict
N	4,619	4,619	4,612	4.612

Table N1. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Credit-Giving to International Donors and NGOs. OLS regressions with a control for education; indicators for whether or not the respondent is in a rural area, whether or not the respondent falls into the 17-35 age range, and whether or not the respondent falls into the 64+ age range; country fixed effects; and ethnic group fixed effects (in columns 3 and 4). Standard errors clustered at the enumeration area in parentheses. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$. The alternative measure of "informed" is whether respondents ever report listening to the news on the radio. The alternative measure of "capacity? is whether the specified area (i.e., 5km radius or 10km radius) had been conflict-free for the past five years according to the PRIO Conflict Site Data Set conflict locations.

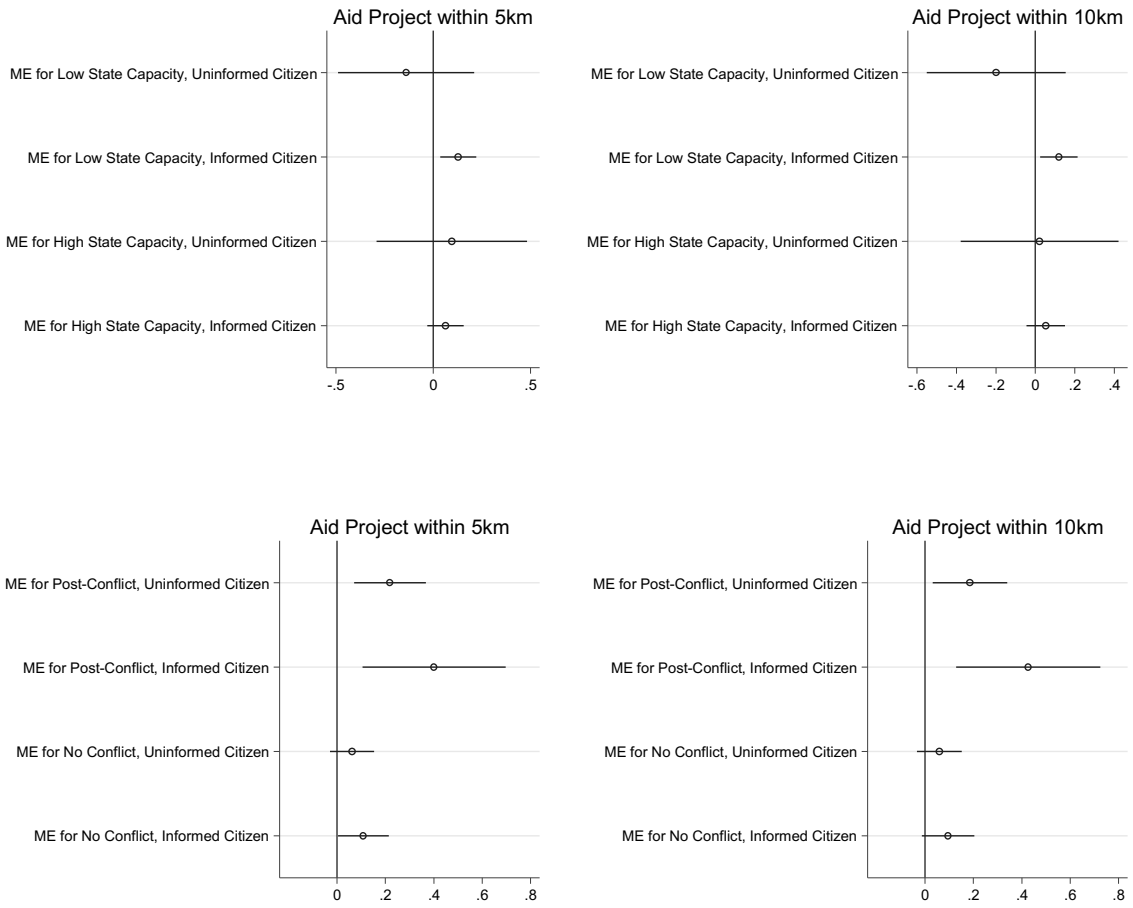

Figure N1. Marginal Effects of Presence of Aid Project on Credit to International NGOs and Donors by State Capacity and Citizen Information. Based on coefficient estimates reported in Appendix Table N1. Coefficients come from OLS regressions of credit to international actors on indicators for state capacity and citizen information and controls for education, whether or not the respondent is in a rural area, whether or not the respondent falls into the 17-35 age range, and whether or not the respondent falls into the 64+ age range and country fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the enumeration area.

Appendix O. Relationship with Pre-Analysis Plans

As described in the text, this research involved two rounds of survey data collection. Before each round of surveying, we pre-registered research questions, hypotheses, and the survey questions that would serve as outcome measures.

For this paper, the relevant section is from the pre-analysis plan that we filed in advance of our first round of surveying under the title "Electoral Accountability." (The pre-analysis plan also registered hypotheses about two other research questions intended to be the subjects of separate papers, one of which is published as Baldwin and Winters (2020)). We reproduce the relevant portion of the pre-analysis plan below.

In the paragraphs that follow, we describe how we subsequently further developed our theory and measurement strategy. The original PAP did not specify the specific regression models with which we would analyze the data nor how we would cluster the standard errors.

Relevant Text from Pre-Analysis Plan:

Information Treatments:

(A1) No information about project prior to measurement of service accessibility, electoral accountability, and government legitimacy outcomes	(B1) Information about project but no attribution of responsibility for funding or implementation	(B2) Information about project and source of funding but no information about implementation	(B3) Information about project and institution responsible for implementation but no information about funding	(B4) Information about project, funding source, and institution responsible for implementation
N=184 (divided between 8 sub-counties)	N=368 (divided between 8 sub-counties)	N=184 (divided between 8 sub-counties)	N=184 (divided between 8 sub-counties)	N=184 (divided between 8 sub-counties)

Research Question:

Do citizens show higher support for local elected representatives if there are foreign funded/NGO-implemented projects in their areas? If so, is it because voters are not able to distinguish between the efforts of their local governments/local representatives and the efforts of donors/NGOs, or is it because they believe that politicians help facilitate the work of donors/NGOs?

…even if bypass aid results in projects that are more accessible to citizens, there are concerns that these types of projects may have unintended negative consequences for political accountability. For example, they may make it harder for elected politicians to oversee projects or for citizens to know appropriate routes for making complaints about projects. Projects run by NGOs may also confuse the electorate in such a way that citizens give politicians undue credit for projects to which they did not contribute. Observational and experimental research from Bangladesh, Mexico, Tanzania and the Philippines suggests that politicians often get credit for projects for which they ostensibly had little responsibility (Croke 2015; Cruz and Schneider forthcoming; De La O 2013; Guiteras and Mobarak 2014). However, it remains an open question whether politicians generally deserve *some* credit for facilitating "bypass aid" or not. (That is, perhaps citizens are not mistaken when they give credit to government officials for non-governmental projects.) Our research will examine *both* whether politicians receive credit for "bypass aid" projects, and, if so, whether it is earned or unearned.

Hypotheses:

We expect citizens who hear about a project to be more supportive of local politicians than those who do not receive information about a project.

It is ambiguous whether citizens who learn a project is donor-funded and/or NGO-implemented will be more or less supportive of local politicians.

We expect the amount of support politicians receive when citizens receive information about a project to be conditional on politicians' perceived and real levels of involvement with the project.

When we give those who either believe the project is government-implemented or government-funded or else unsure about the implementation or funding of the project information about NGO implementation and/or foreign funding, this new information might either increase or decrease support for local politicians. On the one hand, if citizens previously were giving credit to the government for having provided the funding and/or implemented the project, they may reduce the quality of their assessment of incumbent politicians upon finding out that the project was implemented by an NGO and/or funded by a foreign donor. On the other hand, if citizens receive this information and give credit to politicians for having facilitated the project or secured the funding, learning about the project may increase their esteem for the politicians. We will complement our analysis of the outcome questions with analysis of the mechanism questions, specifically examining whether politicians are more likely to win support from donor-funded and/or NGO-implemented projects when they are (a) subjectively perceived to be more involved in the project and (b) objectively more involved in the project.

Outcomes:

We ask about respondents' attitudes toward two local politicians, the LC5 Councilor, who

represents the subcounty in the district government, and the LC3 chairperson, who is the head of the subcounty-level government. For each of these politicians, we ask about the likelihood that the subject would vote to reelect the incumbent official, and we ask about the respondent's general level of satisfaction with the politician.[3] We make comparisons both between the set of respondents who have (B1 – B4) and have not (A1) heard about the project and among the set of respondents who have received different information about the funding and implementation of the project (B1 – B4).

> If the local elections were being held today, how likely or unlikely would you say you are to vote for your current LC5 councilor?
>
> Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your LC5 councilor has performed his/her role over the past five years?
>
> If the local elections were being held today, how likely or unlikely would you say you are to vote for your current LC3 chairperson?
>
> Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your LC3 chairperson has performed his/her role over the past five years?

In order to provide evidence for the mechanisms that we think are at work and/or to diagnose null results, we include a series of additional questions in the survey instrument. Since we believe that the electoral effects of the project involve citizens attributing credit for the project to local politicians, we ask our respondents who deserves credit for the project having helped people in the community. Or in the event that the respondent thinks the project has not helped people, we ask a symmetric question about who deserves blame for the project not having helped people. We also ask two pairs of questions about the actions taken by the LC5 councilor and the LC3 chairperson vis-à-vis the project.

> In your opinion, how helpful is this project in helping meet the needs of people in this community? … If helpful, who deserves the credit for the fact that this project helped some people in this community? … If not helpful, who deserves the blame for the fact that this project did not help people in this community?
>
> Do you think your district (LC5) councilor took actions that made sure the project helped people in this community? … What type of actions do you think your district (LC5) councilor took?
>
> Do you think your subcounty (LC3) chairperson took actions that made sure the project helped people in this community? … What type of actions do you think your subcountry (LC3) chairperson took?

[3] In all places where we are running the survey, both incumbent politicians are in fact running for reelection.

In addition to these subjective measures, we directly asked the implementing partner about the involvement of different politicians and we can objectively classify the 16 politicians in our survey (the LC5 councilors and the LC3 chairpeople in the 8 sub-counties) into those who were involved in the project and those who were not.

Theoretical and Empirical Developments Subsequent to Registration of the PAP

In our first round of data collection, we focused on elected politicians who represented the sub-county as either the executive of the sub-country government (i.e., the LC3 chairperson) or a legislator at the district level (i.e., the LC5 councilor). Our first round of data collection included questions to the implementing partner about incidents of credit-claiming for their projects. Reviewing this data, we became concerned that we were not capturing the most common cases of politicians taking credit for projects, as LC5 councilors were never named as doing this and LC3 chairpersons (and LC5 chairpersons) were named only once. Instead, the politicians most frequently named as doing this were MPs. As a result, in our second round of data collection, we asked respondents about support for the MP and about the MP's actions with regard to the project rather than asking about the LC5 councilor.

In the second round of data collection, we also added an additional outcome measure, directly asking respondents about the extent to which the existence of the project in their community should be expected to enter into people's voting calculus:

> Do you think that – because of this particular project – people in this parish should be more or less likely to vote for the LC3 chairperson/the MP in the next election, or does this particular project not matter for vote choice?

We also dropped one treatment condition for the second round of the survey. In the first round of the survey, we included condition A1 in which we did not reference the aid project in a respondent's community until after we asked about their support for politicians, with the goal of examining whether information about the fact of the project itself changed credit. However, we found that we did not observe differences in respondents' attitudes in this condition. As a result, we dropped this condition from our second round of surveying, manipulating only the amount of information respondents heard about the project. Table O1 shows that there was no difference in responses to the two outcome questions available in the first round between the control condition that described the project (B1) and the control condition where the project was only described later in the survey (A1).

	(1) Satisfaction with Politician (1-5)	(2) Vote for Politician (1-4)
Project Cue	0.02	-0.01
	(0.10)	(0.07)
Baseline Mean	3.33	2.77
N	2,113	2,042

Table O1. Effects of Project Cue. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with an indicator for whether the respondent heard any information about the project, and 15 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (sub-county chairpersons, and district councilors) with standard errors clustered by respondent. Data from first round of survey only. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.

In addition, subsequent to our PAP, we further theoretically developed our model of citizen vote choice, and the relationship between politicians' objective involvement in bypass aid projects (which is likely unknown to most respondents in most cases) and respondents' perceptions of politicians' involvement in bypass aid projects. In particular, if politicians' involvement in projects is a function of the aid oversight capacity of their political offices, then it is possible that citizens may be able to make informed guesses about whether a politician could have been involved in a particular bypass aid project even if they do not actually observe whether this politician was involved. As a result, theoretically, we expect our concept of political offices' aid oversight capacity to moderate the credit that citizens give to politicians even more strongly than politicians' actual involvement. Empirically, this also appears to be the case (in particular, the coefficients in Table E1 in the appendix are somewhat smaller than the coefficients in Table 5, even accounting for the fact that the range for politicians' actual involvement (measured on a 0-4 scale) is twice as wide as the range for oversight capacity (measured on a 0-2 scale)). This thinking also informs our decision to treat the respondents' perceptions of politicians' involvement in the projects as an outcome variable (see Appendix D) rather than as a conditioning variable as we had described in the initial pre-analysis plan.

We note that we developed a proxy for aid oversight capacity based on the structural correlates of political involvement observed in the data from our implementing partner surveys: this measure was generated based on the empirical patterns observed in the data we collected as part of our research project; it was *not* pre-registered.

Additional Outcomes in PAP

In the pre-analysis plan, we describe open-ended questions about who should be credited for projects perceived to be high quality *and* who should be blamed for projects perceived to be low quality. In the end, so few respondents viewed the projects around which we built our study as low quality that we could not look at blame attribution. (Less than 5 percent of respondents said that the project was not at all helpful in meeting the needs of people in their community and were therefore asked the question about blame attribution.) In addition, because respondents were only asked either about credit or blame depending on whether they

reported the project to be helpful, we have missing data for both outcomes. As a result, we have focused on the direct questions about whether respondents thought politicians took actions to make sure the project helped people in their communities because these questions were asked to all respondents regardless of whether they reported the project was helpful.

In the pre-analysis plan, we also proposed to examine the effects of the projects on satisfaction with the way a politician performed his or her role in the past five years (round 1)/past year (round 2). Possible answers were very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, which we code on a 1-5 scale with 5 equal to very satisfied. We present these results in Table O2 below. Although the coefficients on our bypass aid treatment and the interaction effect between the bypass aid treatment and oversight capacity are in the same direction as in the tables in our main analysis, the effects are weaker, suggesting this is a less sensitive outcome measure, possibly because it does not force the respondent to consider whether another occupant of this office could do the role better. Interestingly, the unconditional effects of oversight capacity are even larger than in Tables 5 and 6 in the paper, emphasizing people are more satisfied with the way politicians perform their role in places with higher oversight capacity.

	(1) Satisfaction with Politician (1-5)	(2) Satisfaction with Politician (1-5)
Full Aid Info Treatment	-0.09	-0.13
	(0.11)	(0.12)
Oversight Capacity X Full Aid Info Treatment	0.05	0.10
	(0.08)	(0.09)
Oversight Capacity of Political Office	0.22***	0.16***
	(0.04)	(0.04)
Baseline Mean	3.12	3.15
N	4,723	3,731

Table O2. Heterogenous Treatment Effects on Satisfaction with Way Politicians Perform Role. Effects estimated from OLS regression models with an indicator for the full aid information treatment, a politician-specific measure of oversight capacity, an interaction between the two, and 35 random-assignment strata fixed effects. Observations represent respondent's views on different politicians (sub-county chairpersons, district councilors, and MPs) with standard errors clustered by respondent. Model 1 includes all respondents and model 2 includes only respondents with incorrect or uncertain priors. The baseline mean row reports the average value across respondents not receiving the full aid info treatment and with regard to politicians with low oversight capacity. *** - $p < 0.01$; ** - $p < 0.05$; * - $p < 0.10$.