

Who Needs Information (and What Kind) To Cooperate? Behavioral Evidence From a Field Experiment in Rural Liberia *

Eric Mvukiyehe[†]

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Abstract

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This paper uses a 10-month long field experiment in postwar Liberia and original behavioral data to investigate the effects of different peacebuilding strategies—a security provision intervention and a civic mobilization campaign—on social cohesion, and to investigate potential heterogeneity of effects across different types of local settings. Using individual contributions to a public goods game that provide behavioral measures for levels of social cohesion both within and between communities, three sets of empirical findings emerge: (i) I find no evidence of independent (or joint) treatment effects on measures of intra-group and intergroup cooperation; (ii) I find no systematic heterogeneous effects hypothesized to occur across settings that have different degrees of valuation of pre-existing customs; and (iii) I find that a discussion module introduced in a random subsample of communities before the second round of the game has strong positive effects on both outcome measures of collective action, but these effects seem to be concentrated among communities that have weak valuation of pre-existing customs. Theoretical and policy implications of these results are discussed.

*Please contact the author directly if you need to access the full paper version.

[†]PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, Columbia University.
E-mail: Enm2105@columbia.edu