



Can Positive Public Recognition Lead to Good Governance? *A Field Study in Cooperation with Bwindi National Park*

This project works from the theory that fostering collective pride in good governance and providing a positive recognition for local leaders who forego corruption will decrease corruption in a national park revenue-sharing programme in western Uganda.

Project Summary

Most research about strategies to reduce corruption focuses on detection and punishment. **In this field study, corruption is addressed from a different angle — providing positive public recognition for officials who demonstrate excellence in executing their responsibilities.** While very few studies have focused on using positive recognition in the public sector, such practices are commonplace in other aspects of life — everything from employee-of-the-month awards to student performance certificates and outstanding community service medals.



Working with our government partner, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, this project aims to see whether it is possible to foster collective pride in good governance and improved delivery of the Park's revenue-sharing program using positive recognition of local leaders. Through revenue-sharing, a portion of the Park's gate fees are transferred to the 94 villages that border the Park. Per village, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) shares an average of 1,300 USD — the rough equivalent of four household incomes. Villages elect a project management committee that proposes projects to UWA. Upon approval, UWA revenue-sharing funds pass through several layers of local government before reaching villages for implementation. In the past, a significant share of these funds has been lost to corruption or misdirected to other projects prior to reaching the local people.

Policy and Programming Implications

The research will be particularly relevant for those who have a role in addressing corruption, overseeing local governance, working within community-driven development, and striving to improve the relationships between local people and the management of lands set aside for conservation. Because positive recognition can be rolled out in a variety of ways that work within the resources of governments, this may prove a broadly successful way to build integrity in the management of public funds.

The Global Integrity Anti-Corruption Evidence (GI-ACE) research programme **supports 14 projects** around the world **generating actionable evidence** that policymakers, practitioners, and advocates can use to **design and implement more effective anti-corruption initiatives.**

Research Questions

- Can providing local leaders charged with oversight an opportunity to earn public recognition decrease corruption and improve the delivery of funds for implementation?
- Does the intervention have a positive impact on civic expectations about good governance and corruption?
- Does the intervention result in more equitable planning and better delivery of revenue-sharing projects?

Methodology

A randomized field experiment and linked ethnographic field study are employed to test whether offering recognition to local committees for the successful planning and implementation of revenue-sharing projects — along with radio announcements and public ceremonies praising good governance — will result in more equitable planning and better delivery of revenue-sharing projects. Outcomes in villages eligible for positive recognition are compared with villages not eligible in the study's first phase.

Our research design also maximizes our ability to learn about this kind of approach to anti-corruption. In particular, a paired ethnographic study is employed that will probe why the intervention does or does not generate results. A series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions will be used to explore how citizens and leaders form attitudes about corruption, the conditions under which these attitudes might change, and the types of strategies that are likely to be most effective in reducing corruption and promoting good governance.

Research Team Members

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