

RECOGNIZING LOCAL LEADERS AS AN ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY: EXPERIMENTAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FROM UGANDA

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01

The Problem

In many settings, norms among the public and officials do not support anti-corruption efforts



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NORMS OFTEN DO NOT SUPPORT ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

- Long-term experience of corruption results in apathy, powerlessness, and resignation
- Corruption can be socially acceptable when it benefits the social network of officials
- There are no “principled principals” willing to address corruption when alerted to it



Revenue-sharing aims to promote conservation and development

However, up to 80% of funds never reach their destination and a majority of residents report corruption is a major problem



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02

The Approach

Recognize officials who manage public funds with integrity to reset norms and expectations



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Offer positive, public recognition to elected leaders for adhering to management guidelines

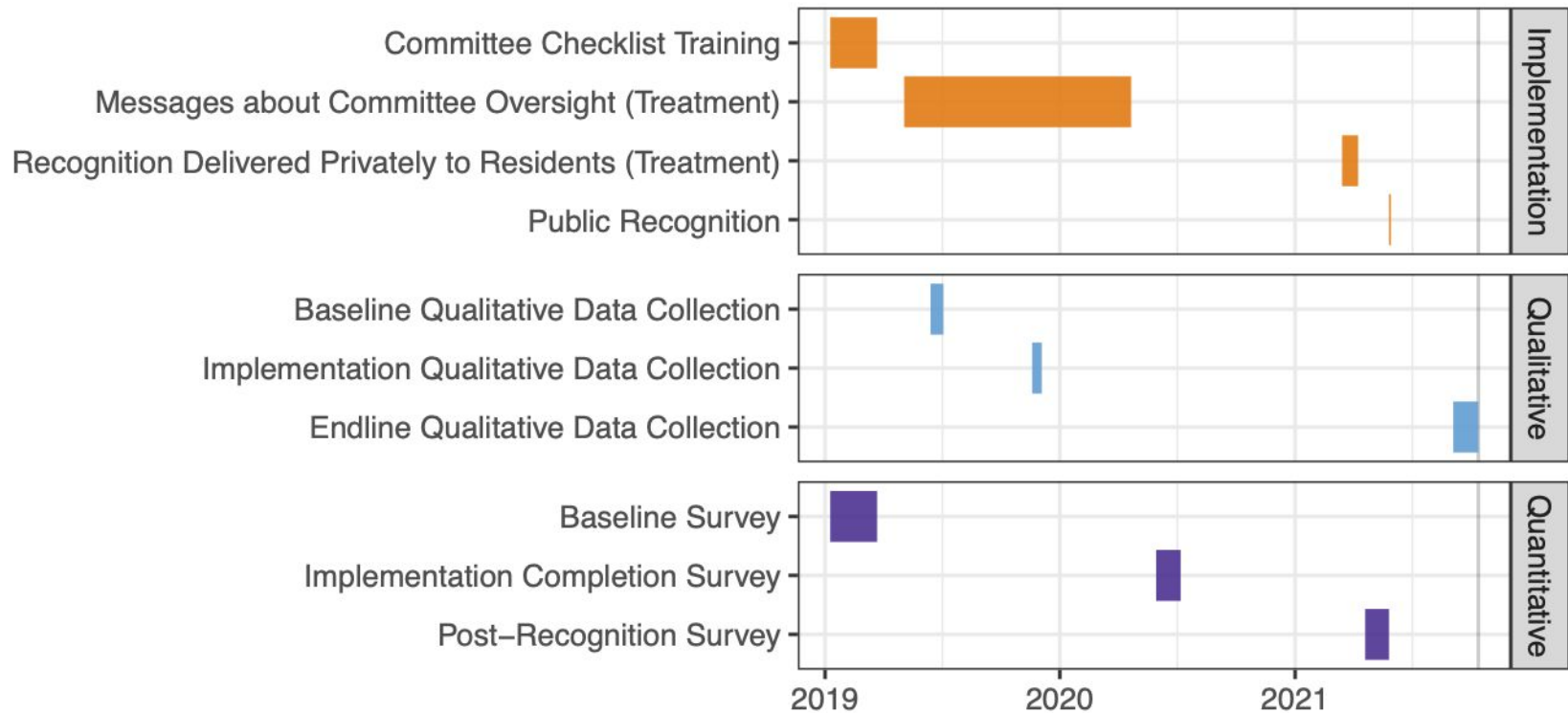
Goal is to motivate officials to handle public funds with integrity and increase public expectations for good governance



03

Research Design

Randomized trial that tests effects of both of eligibility for recognition and receipt of recognition, with a linked ethnographic study



Multi-year recognition program successfully delivered

04

Experimental Results

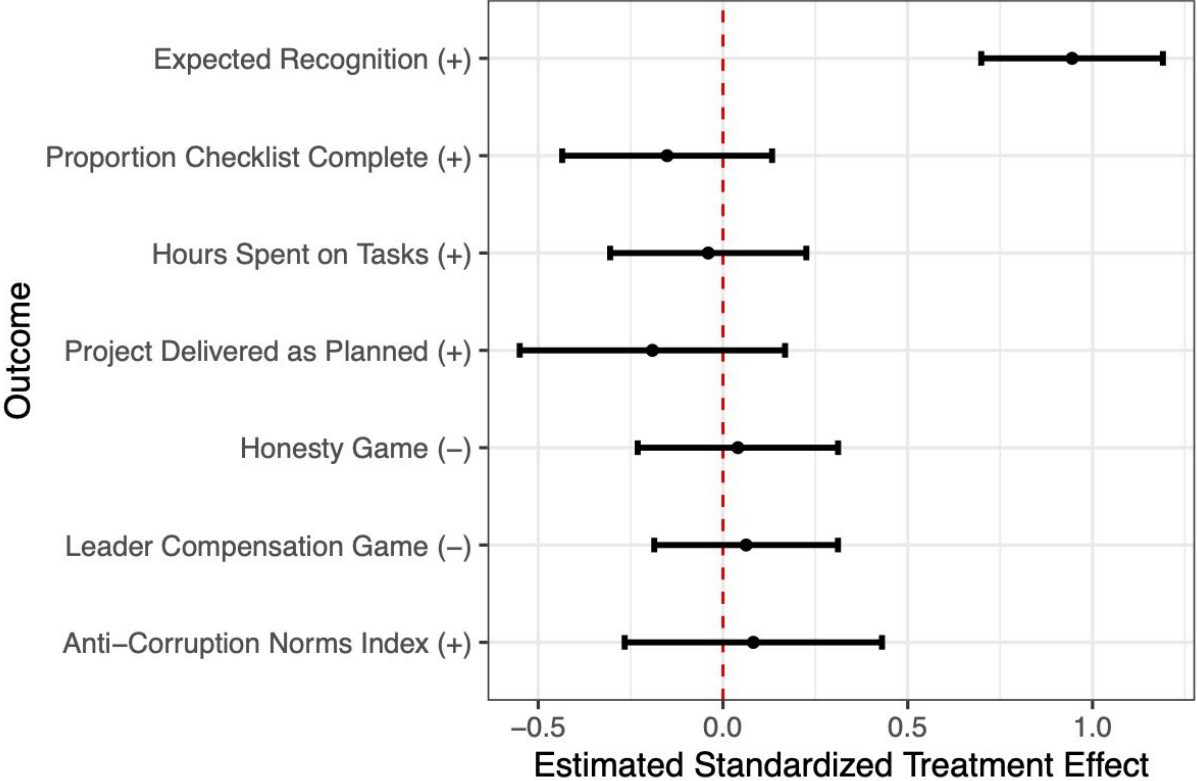
Neither eligibility for recognition or learning about awardees improved outcomes or changed anti-corruption norms, though there is optimism about long-term effects



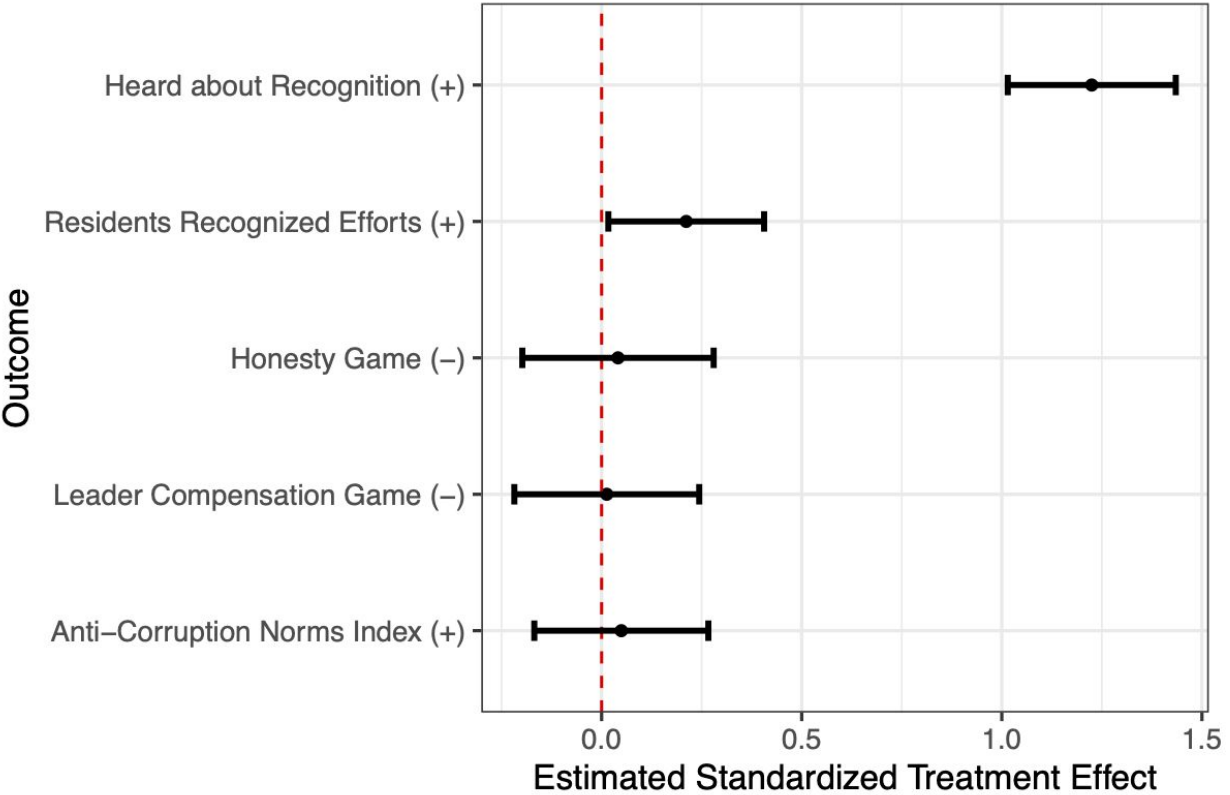
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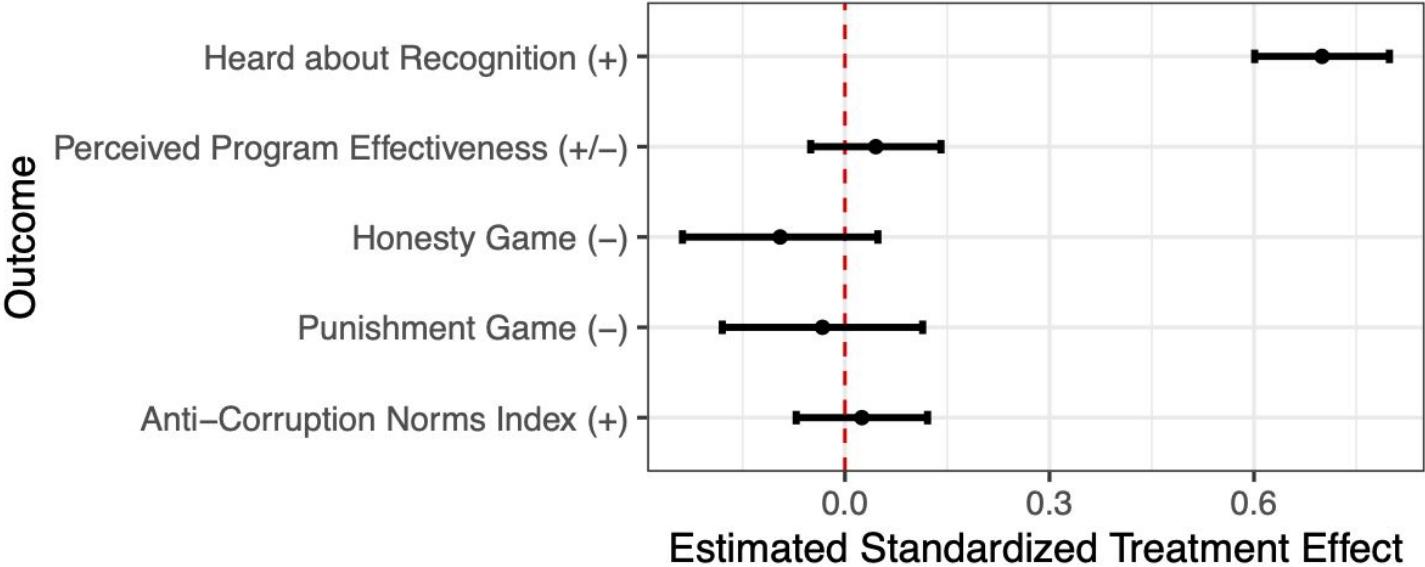
Although leaders expected recognition, they did not change behaviors or norms



When leaders learned about awardees, they did not change behaviors or norms



When residents learned about awardees, they did not change behaviors or norms



05

Ethnographic Results

Neither eligibility for recognition or learning about awardees improved outcomes or changed anti-corruption norms, though there is optimism about long-term effects



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Optimism about changes that started to happen... in terms of vigilance of community members

“This time there was limited theft like when compared to the previous projects... Most people in the previous projects did not get goats and even those who got very poor quality of breeds. We followed all steps of the guidelines from identifying the contractors to participate in the whole revenue sharing process.”
[R3.I21]

Optimism... in terms of vigilance and collective agency of community members

“We worked very hard in order to get this recognition and indeed we were happy when we got it. A schedule was drawn with a member designated to look after the project on a daily basis. The community members would participate but mostly remind us to do our roles properly so that we get the reward.”
[R3.I19]

Preference for tangible benefits vs. symbolic recognition

“The committee members who led projects to this level would have been rewarded with something else like if they were given some money as a reward, it would have been good. I think it’s the best form of recognition for committee members.” [R3.I3]

“I think that in addition to all of that [symbolic recognition], the individuals should be given a tangible token such as money or goats or just a hamper of household products like soap.” [R3.I12]



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Developing and exercising collective agency: social recognition positive impact on future projects

“when the councilors interfered, they [community members] were very vocal and these councilors have been removed from leadership positions within our community. The community members want to work hard and they want to make sure that this road is worked to the best that it can be because we know the importance of this road.” [R3.I2]

“I think it will encourage people to work hard to not only perform extraordinarily but also to leave tangible results that anybody can see.” [R3.I16]

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Implications and Recommendations

Recognition should be tied to instrumental concerns of officials and be complementary to structural approaches



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LINK RECOGNITION PROGRAMS TO COMPLEMENTARY ANTI-CORRUPTION APPROACHES

- Use recognition as a complementary approach to structural reforms
- Build and reinforce recognition programs over long periods to heighten expectations for good governance
- Link recognition to the instrumental concerns of public officials (e.g., salary, rotations, promotion, election)

Integrate norm-based and anti-corruption approaches

- Combine recognition with social norms transformation approaches that engage community activists or change agents at local government and community level
- Recognition should be considered at multiple levels (local government and community level) with a combination of symbolic and tangible elements

07

Ongoing Research

Recognizing procurement officers in district governments to promote transparency and integrity in public procurement



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Training procurement officers on legal guidelines for transparency in procurement

Testing whether offering recognition in a national awards ceremony for adhering to procurement standards boosts compliance



Funded by UK aid from the British people, GI-ACE works to support researchers generating world-class evidence on anti-corruption efforts, in order to inform practitioners' efforts to deliver better outcomes. Working alongside 14 teams conducting operationally relevant, rigorous, and actionable research, we help communicate and share findings in ways that support practitioners to design and implement more effective anti-corruption strategies. In addition to generating evidence about anti-corruption initiatives, we are learning how to strengthen partnerships between researchers and practitioners, and how to communicate about research in ways that meet the needs of practitioners.



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