Survey Response and Data Quality in the Evaluation of the Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP)

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International Workshop on Comparative Survey Design and Implementation

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Program Facts

- **RTP goals:** expand political liberties, civil rights, and citizens’ voice and accountability
  - Strengthen justice sector
  - Increase civic participation
  - Promote civil rights and liberties

- **Three-year project**
  - October 2008—threshold program signed
  - Q3 2009 to Q1 2010—implementation begins
  - March 2010—program evaluation begins

- **Program cost:** $24.7 million
## Program Components

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| **Strengthening the Rule of Law for Policy Reform** | Facilitate the rapid implementation of the legislative reform agenda  
                                       | Provide training and targeted technical assistance to the judiciary                                                                                   |
| **Strengthening Civic Participation**   | Increase civic participation at the local level to improve citizens’ input into the formation of local government policies, development planning, and service delivery  
                                       | Strengthen the capacity of local officials for public participation  
                                       | Build the capacity of local civil society organizations (CSOs)                                                                                         |
| **Strengthening Civil Society**          | Build the capacity of national CSOs  
                                       | Increase the input of civil society into the formulation and implementation of national public policy                                                                 |
| **Strengthening the Inspectorate Services of the Rwandan National Police (RNP)** | Support the Inspectorate Services of the RNP to effectively monitor internal police performance                                                                 |
| **Media Strengthening**                  | Build the professional capacity of journalists, media owners, and media associations                                                                 |
Program Areas Evaluated

- **Civic participation**: improving the local government’s ability to interact productively with citizens and civil society to formulate policy and deliver services

- **RNP’s Inspectorate Services**: establishing a public system through the Office of Inspectorate Services for collecting and resolving citizens’ complaints about police conduct

- **Media**: promoting free, responsible media in Rwanda through the establishment of two community radio stations
Evaluation Design: Civic Participation

- **Treatment**: support for CSOs’ efforts to advocate for local issues and train local government officials to be more responsive to citizens’ priorities

- **Outcomes of interest**:  
  - Ability to analyze and monitor the government’s performance  
  - Knowledge of mechanisms and opportunities for civic participation?  
  - Public input into local policymaking and governance  
  - Satisfaction with the provision of government services
Random assignment:

- Pairs of districts were matched using population data and economic indicators
- Within each pair, one district was randomly assigned to receive benefits during the project’s first year
Evaluation Design: Police

- **Treatment:** 250 complaint boxes across Rwanda

- **Outcomes of interest:**
  - Citizens’ understanding of disciplinary procedures
  - Citizens’ confidence in how the police handle complaints
  - Citizens’ views on whether police conduct has improved?

- **Nonrandom evaluation design:**
  - Treatment group—citizens living in sectors with complaint boxes
  - Comparison group—citizens living in sectors without complaint boxes
  - 208 of Rwanda’s 416 sectors have complaint boxes (some have multiple boxes)
Evaluation Design: Media

- **Treatment**: two new community radio stations

- **Outcomes of interest**:  
  - Awareness of the broadcasts and programming of the community radio stations  
  - Knowledge of local current affairs  
  - Access to reliable and objective news sources

- **Nonrandom evaluation design**:  
  - Pre-post design of citizens living in the broadcast regions of the two RTP-supported radio stations
Implementation: Household and Respondent Sampling

- Target sample for baseline survey: 10,000 respondents nationwide
  - Calculated sample targets by sector, with the population proportionate to the national population
  - Chose households using a “random walk” method
  - Randomly selected an adult respondent from each selected household
Implementation: Questionnaire Design

- Focused on 10 outcomes of interest

- Modules:
  - Demographic Information
  - Media/Radio (Services and Programming)
  - Local Media/Radio (MCC-Funded Radio Stations)
  - Civic Participation (Activities)
  - Civic Participation (Opinions and Perceptions)
  - Government Services
  - RNP (Complaint Procedures)
  - RNP (Confidence in Police)

- Translated into Kinyarwanda
The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study of respondents across three districts:
- Four observers: staff from the Rwandan National Institute of Statistics, USAID, and local data collector

The pilot study tested:
- The clarity of the survey questions
- Sampling procedures
- Interviewers’ ability to meet production goals
Implementation: Baseline Data Collection

- Baseline data collection occurred between January 15 and February 8, 2011
- Data collection was conducted by a local data collection firm
- Response rate was 96.3 percent
Challenges: Design Phase

- Lack of existing surveys on governance and civic participation
  - **Issue**: Few examples of questionnaires related to key outcomes of interest in this study, including citizen participation and citizens’ perceptions of the government; no examples of surveys on governance or civic participation in Rwanda
  - **Response**: Adapted similar survey questions where possible

- Rwandan government’s authority over data collection efforts
  - **Issue**: Approval requirements affected survey design
  - **Response**: Maintained open dialog with stakeholders throughout the process; obtained approval with few changes
Hard-copy questionnaires vs. computer-assisted personal interviewing

- **Issue**: Though less expensive and easier to use, hard-copy questionnaires left more room for interviewer error related to skip patterns, unclear markings, and spelling variations
- **Response**: Thoroughly reviewed text variables during data cleaning

Absent respondents

- **Issue**: When a respondent was absent, interviewers moved to the next randomly selected household and completed the process again, which raised concerns about nonresponse bias
- **Response**: Confirmed minimal bias by comparing demographic variables in data set to demographic data available from the World Bank and World Health Organization
Challenges: Implementation Phase (cont’d.)

- Cultural norms and practices
  - Issues
    - Culture of deference to authority
    - Sensitive nature of the questions paired with the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan government
  - Responses
    - Added introductory scripts to assure respondents that we wanted to hear their opinions regardless of their education level or background
    - Emphasized the confidentiality of respondents’ information and the importance of the data
    - Used norming statements, hypothetical questions, and questions on basic government knowledge to gain insight into respondents’ civic engagement while reducing the sensitive nature of the questions
Discussion

- Existing survey methods may be adaptable in this context
- Triangulation, using multiple methods, could show whether responses are biased
- It is crucial to assess the development of governance and civic participation measures
For More Information

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