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GOVERNANCE PROGRAM | POLICY MEMO

Meet the Candidates: Videos and Voting Behavior in Uganda



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Elections are one of the central components of the democratic process. In many countries, elections are the primary means by which citizens express their preferences for representatives and policies. However, many citizens lack even the most basic information about the candidates seeking to represent them in office.

There have been numerous efforts in countries around the world to provide citizens with information about incumbent politicians, parties, and governments, with the goal of increasing accountability and allowing voters to make more informed choices on election day. A growing literature looks at the effects of information on voter knowledge and behavior, including turnout and vote choice, but to date there have been mixed results. We still know relatively little about the conditions under which information is effective in shaping knowledge and behavior.

Meet the Candidates was designed to compare the effect of information in two different political contexts, while holding constant country and constituency: intra-party primary elections and multi-party general elections in Uganda. Unlike a number of information campaigns which provide information on the incumbent alone, Meet the Candidates was specifically designed with the goal of providing equivalent information about all candidates in a given constituency.

Researchers worked with Innovations for Poverty Action Uganda, the Agency for Transformation, the Political Science Department at Makerere University, and the Leo Africa Institute to conduct a randomized evaluation assessing the impact of pre-recorded informational videos of parliamentary candidates on voters' knowledge and behavior. In the videos, candidates for Member of Parliament in a constituency answered a set of questions about their backgrounds and policy

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