

Peace from the Bottom Up:
Peacebuilding & Democracy Promotion in Liberia
Demonstration Project

Endline Report

Working Draft 1.0

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1 Introduction

Intimidation and fraud undermine elections as opportunities for citizens to express political preferences freely. Unfortunately, recent marred elections in the developing world make these concerns all too salient. Strategies for reducing the potential for intimidation and fraud may be elite-centric, including threats of international sanction. Findings on the effectiveness of elite-centric strategies tend to be highly tentative, as the evidence base is made up mostly of macro-level comparisons for which appropriate counterfactuals are difficult to establish. Strategies against intimidation and fraud may also take a bottom-up approach, shaping opportunities, constraints, and incentives on the ground. Perhaps the most well-known class of bottom-up strategies include election-day monitoring, which has been subject to a growing and exceptionally sophisticated set of evaluations and studies. The results of these studies show both the promise and limitations of election-day monitoring for deterring fraud and intimidation.

A key limitation that researchers studying election-day monitoring point out is that many of the actions that undermine free and fair elections occur at moments well in advance at election day. This leads us to ask, what types of strategies could be applied during the critical pre-election period to contribute to reduce the potential for intimidation and fraud to undermine the quality of electoral participation?

The Peacebuilding and Democracy Promotion in Liberia (PBDPL) demonstration project was designed to study the impact of two types of strategies for reducing intimidation-based threats to free and fair elections. First was a *curriculum-based* strategy that combined civic education with normative messaging. This strategy was motivated by the assumptions that (i) information on civic rights tends to be undersupplied and therefore citizens too-easily surrender their rights and (ii) communities may fail to work collectively against threats to free political expression because of a lack of common knowledge among community-members about the desire to act against threatening actors. Second is a *security-based* strategy that involved the creation of new “security committee” institutions in rural towns, which then liaised regularly with local United Nations peacekeeping contingents on local threats. This strategy was motivated by the assumption that the credibility of the U.N. peacekeepers as a deterrent was undermined by a common perception that the peacekeepers were insufficiently aware of local threats.

This report presents general findings from the demonstration project. First, we elaborate on the assumptions and hypotheses that motivated the project, discussing what they imply about the

how curriculum and security interventions should affect the potential for free and fair elections. Next, we provide relevant details on the Liberian context, the project design, data gathering, and the analysis plan. We then present findings related to the more proximate impacts on violence, intimidation, and the quality of civic engagement, as well as second-order impacts on social and economic vitality.

This project is part of a blooming literature that uses randomized field experiments to create a reliable evidence base on interventions in the democracy and governance and peacebuilding sectors. The conclusion discusses the implications of this project for further research as well ways to invest in free and fair elections through strategies that begin to promote change well before election day.

2 Assumptions and Hypotheses

This section will elaborate on the following:

Curriculum-based strategies

Motivating a civic education intervention:

- Assumption there is likely to be no one to supply information on civic rights and so people do not know them.
- People are therefore easily induced into surrendering their rights.
- Hypothesis is that external provision of information on civic rights solves the under-supply problem.

Motivating a normative messaging intervention:

- Assumption is that communities face a coordination problem against threats (Collier and Vincente, 2011). Solving the problem requires common knowledge that there is a critical mass of community-members willing to act against threatening actors. This may fail to emerge due to spiral of silence.
- Hypothesis is that convening of meetings on rights allows for common knowledge to build and therefore increases likelihood that threatening actors will be deterred.

Security-based strategies

Motivating a security institution intervention:

- Assumption is that there exists a common belief that UN peacekeepers are insufficiently aware of local threats and therefore fail to deter them. Evidence on this comes from our own research on peacekeeping in Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire (Mvukiyehe and Samii, 2012) and work by Autesserre (2010) on peacekeeping in Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Hypothesis is that creating regular interaction between communities and peacekeeping contingents will increase peacekeepers' awareness of threats and create confidence about such awareness among community-members. Note that for this hypothesis to be implied, it must be that the beliefs of threatening actors are also affected. We expect this to be true because even if threatening actors come from outside the community, they will tend to rely on local informants (Kalyvas, 2006) who would be likely to pass the message.

Two types of evidence are necessary to validate this set of assumptions and hypotheses. First is descriptive evidence on the assumptions. Who are the threatening actors? Are communities' relations to these actors consistent with the assumptions above? Second is causal evidence related to the hypotheses. Do these interventions bring about the expected types of change? Do they do so in a manner that is consistent with the hypotheses? The PBDPL demonstration project was designed to produce these types of evidence. Surveys and community observer reports from a representative set of rural Liberian communities were used to assess assumptions. Random assignment to various program conditions as well as multiple methods of outcome observation were used to assess the hypotheses. The project design is discussed in more detail below.

3 Context of the Intervention

This section will elaborate on the following:

- General context, including troublesome elections that motivate the need for investing in measures that promote the combined goals of peacebuilding and democratic institution-building. In Liberia in the run-up to the 2011 elections, these concerns were front and center, particularly after the electoral debacle in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire.
- Details on the Liberian 2011 elections.

- General background conditions in rural Liberia that motivate the project, including levels of illiteracy, poor media access, and remoteness of communities in the countryside provide some basis for the assumptions underpinning the curriculum-based strategy hypotheses.
- Research that we undertook in years prior in Liberia (Mvukiyehe and Samii, 2012) motivating the intervention, suggesting that the local security gap was potential area of concern, providing some basis for the assumptions underpinning the security-based strategy hypothesis.

4 Project Design and Activities

Intervention activities

The *civic education* intervention combined a curriculum designed by Liberia’s National Elections Commission to increase citizens’ awareness of proper electoral practices with normative messaging about peace and gender rights. This curriculum was administered through monthly community meetings that were led by our field facilitators.

The *security* intervention was conducted in rural towns, and involved the nomination of community members to a “security committee.” The protocol was that 10-12 people would be nominated to the committee. In half of the security committee communities, this nomination was done by the town chief, and in the other half this was done by vote at a community meeting, allowing us to assess whether either of these two procedures adds more value to the intervention. At the start of the project, the committee members were instructed on the types of threats and issues that they were to assess. Then, each month, two members of the committee were brought to the local UN peacekeeping contingent base to participate in an afternoon-long discussion of local threats along with security committee representatives from other communities in the project. During the meeting, threats and concerns were raised and strategies were discussed for addressing them. The protocol was for committee members to rotate in their participation in the meetings, although in practice this was done in about half of the communities, whereas in the other half the same 2 to 4 people participated in all the meetings with the peacekeepers.

Assignment of interventions

The trial uses a multi-way hierarchical design¹ that will allow us to measure effects for a number of treatments and sub-treatments. These are described below. The Liberia trial randomly assigns these treatment conditions over a set of 147 communities.²

Security committees. 80 out of the 147 communities are randomly assigned to receive a security committee. This will allow us to measure the effect of the security committees on average. The committee's presence will be publicly known, and communities hosting committees will be socialized to the intervention in a meeting at the start of the intervention. We are interested to know how legitimacy may be conferred to committees such as these. In order to do so, we have randomly selected 32 of these committees to be nominated through a community ballot process, with the rest being appointed by the community chief(s).³ We are also interested in knowing how spill-over and synergy effects from committees in neighboring areas may moderate the effectiveness of the intervention. As such, we have randomly manipulated the proportion of villages in an area that will receive security committees. Thus, if we group the communities into "clans", the third-tier administrative unit in Liberia, then a randomly selected half of the clans will contain security committees in a relatively high proportion of communities, and the other half will contain security committees in a relatively low proportion of communities. In this way, we have exogenous variation in the density of security committee communities from clan to clan.

Civic and peace education. 45 of the 147 communities are randomly assigned to receive a civic and peace education curriculum, with 30 of them being in communities that also have a security committee. The civic and peace education curriculum in Liberia has been developed by our NGO partner, Liberia Democracy Watch. The curriculum involves various group activities to be carried out in monthly sessions over a year to deepen appreciation and knowledge of democratic and non-violent means of dispute resolution and political expression.

[Table 1 here]

Table 1 shows the distribution of the 147 communities over the treatment conditions. As Table 1 indicates, we will not have adequate power to measure all community-level effect

¹ For design and analytical principles for hierarchical designs, see Hudgens and Halloran (2008) and McConnell et al. (2010).

² Formally, the unit of randomization is the Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) "enumeration area," and programming will be centered in the largest town in the enumeration area. Enumeration areas were created by LISGIS as geographic units that are similar in population size (about 500 people on average) and that sit below the "clan" level and above the "town" level in the administrative unit hierarchy. Thus, enumeration areas are clusters of 5-10 towns and villages.

³ The determination of the number, 32, to have the community balloting is based on the need to preserve orthogonality of treatment assignments along with the other treatments that are being used.

interactions with adequate statistical precision. This is a limitation based on the resources available. Rather, our interest is in measuring average effects across the main treatment variations.

[Figure 1 here]

Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of the intervention sites. The labeled, colored dots on the map each show the centroid for a “clan,” which consist of 6 to 30 communities. The red and green outlines, with the labeling of “groups” numbered from 1 to 12, show how the clans and the communities they contained were geographically blocked prior to randomization. The blocking was based, as is apparent, on location and proximity to each other, as well as mutual proximity to a peacekeeping deployment point.

[Figure 2 here]

Within each group, the order of randomization was such that each of the clans in the group was first randomly assigned to a security committee treatment “density” condition, and then the communities within the clans were assigned to host security committees, education programs, or both. Then, finally, the security committee selection method was assigned. This order of randomization is shown in Figure 2. The randomization was conducted using the “sample()” function in the R statistical computing environment.

5 Data

Endline survey

A survey of household decision-makers and program participants was undertaken during the six weeks that followed the October 11, 2011, general election. A household decision-maker was defined as a household member who was entrusted with important household decisions, such as over finances and activities of children. In each of the project communities, 6 households were randomly selected from updated lists of heads of household compiled by community observers who were trained by the project team. Three of the randomly selected households were assigned to host an interview with a male household decision-maker, and the other three were assigned to host an interview with a female household decision-maker. In communities that hosted security committees, three committee members were randomly selected for interview. All random selection was done by assigning an identification number to individuals on the respective lists, and then using the “sample()” function in R to draw the appropriate identification numbers without replacement. In communities that did not host security committees, the community chief was asked to nominate

three people that could speak on security affairs. Finally, each of the community chiefs was also interviewed. Enumeration teams contacted community observers to arrange for those selected to be brought for interview during the days that the team would visit the community. The survey questionnaire was written in Liberian English, with on-the-spot translation to local languages carried out by the enumerators when necessary.

The enumeration team consisted of 30 researchers recruited with assistance from the Carter Center in Liberia and the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services. All team members were experienced survey researchers, and they included members from all of the districts covered by the study. The project co-investigators trained the enumeration team themselves over two weeks at the Carter Center office in Gbarnga, including two rounds of practice interviews with local community members. Enumerators were assigned to work in areas close to their home district to ensure language compatibility.

The survey itself consisted of ten pages with modules covering demographics, economic activities, PBDPL project activities, associational life, civic participation, electoral participation, electoral violence, political attitudes, insecurity, inter-personal norms, and media access. The interviews took approximately one hour to complete. Survey respondents were provided with 70 Liberian dollars as a token of appreciation for their participation. In addition to the questionnaire items, the interview included the following behavioral activities:

- A vignette in which respondents were to choose among fictional candidates representing regional, ethnic, national, and material interests.
- A vignette in which respondents were asked to fill in a false ballot that resembled the actual ballot used in the election, used to assess the propensity to make mistakes in filling ballot papers.
- Offer of a petition against political violence for the respondent to sign and the enumerator to send to political leaders.
- Offer of a complaint card for the respondent to fill out and the enumerator to send to a leader of the respondent's choosing.
- Offer to purchase newspaper articles prepared by the project team.
- A trust game in which the enumerator informed the respondent that he/she did not have change for the 70 LD token and would leave a larger sum with a neighbor who could make

change and provide the payment, and then asked the respondent whether he/she minded this.

Finally, the survey included items completed by enumerator based on observation. This included opinions on whether the respondent appeared to be reluctant or distracted during the interview.

[Details will be added here on non-response patterns.]

In addition to the survey data, the project regularly collected community-well-being and events data with the assistance of community observers. [Details will be added on these data.]

6 Analysis Plan

Survey data

This section will elaborate on the following details of the survey data analysis plan

Subgroups:

- Male household decision makers
- Female household decision makers
- Security decision-makers
- Chiefs

Treatment variations

- 4 main conditions
- Nomination versus ballot subconditions for security committee
- Peace versus gender training for civic education
- Spill-over conditions: study designed to test for spill overs. If they are present, they will likely induce bias toward null in main results.

Measures

- Indices based on the different modules.

Statistical considerations

- Cluster level assignment
- Multiple testing
- Non-response

Community level data

Sections will also elaborate on analysis plan for the community-level data.

7 Findings

This section will discuss findings on the themes listed below. Until results are produced, consult tables in the preliminary analysis appendix.

Violence, Intimidation, and Quality of Civic Engagement

- Civic engagement
- Electoral participation and violence
- Political attitudes and trust
- Community cohesion and insecurity
- Community decision-making power and authority
- Acceptance and prejudices
- Media engagement
- Fear and insecurity
- Individual openness and concentration

Social and Economic Vitality Outcomes

- Income, consumption and assets
- Investments
- Savings, credit, and debt
- Agricultural production
- Associational life
- Trust between community members

8 Conclusion

A conclusion will be inserted that discusses,

- Recap motivation, design, and findings.
- Conclusions regarding what kinds of investments are worthwhile for democracy promotion and peacebuilding.
- Conclusions regarding the use of randomized control trials in peacebuilding and democracy promotion.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: Distribution of communities over treatment conditions

	No education	Civic and peace education	Total
No security committee	52	15	67
Security committee nominated by chief	30	18	48
Security committee by ballot	20	12	32
Total	102	45	147

Figure 1: Geographic distribution of intervention sites

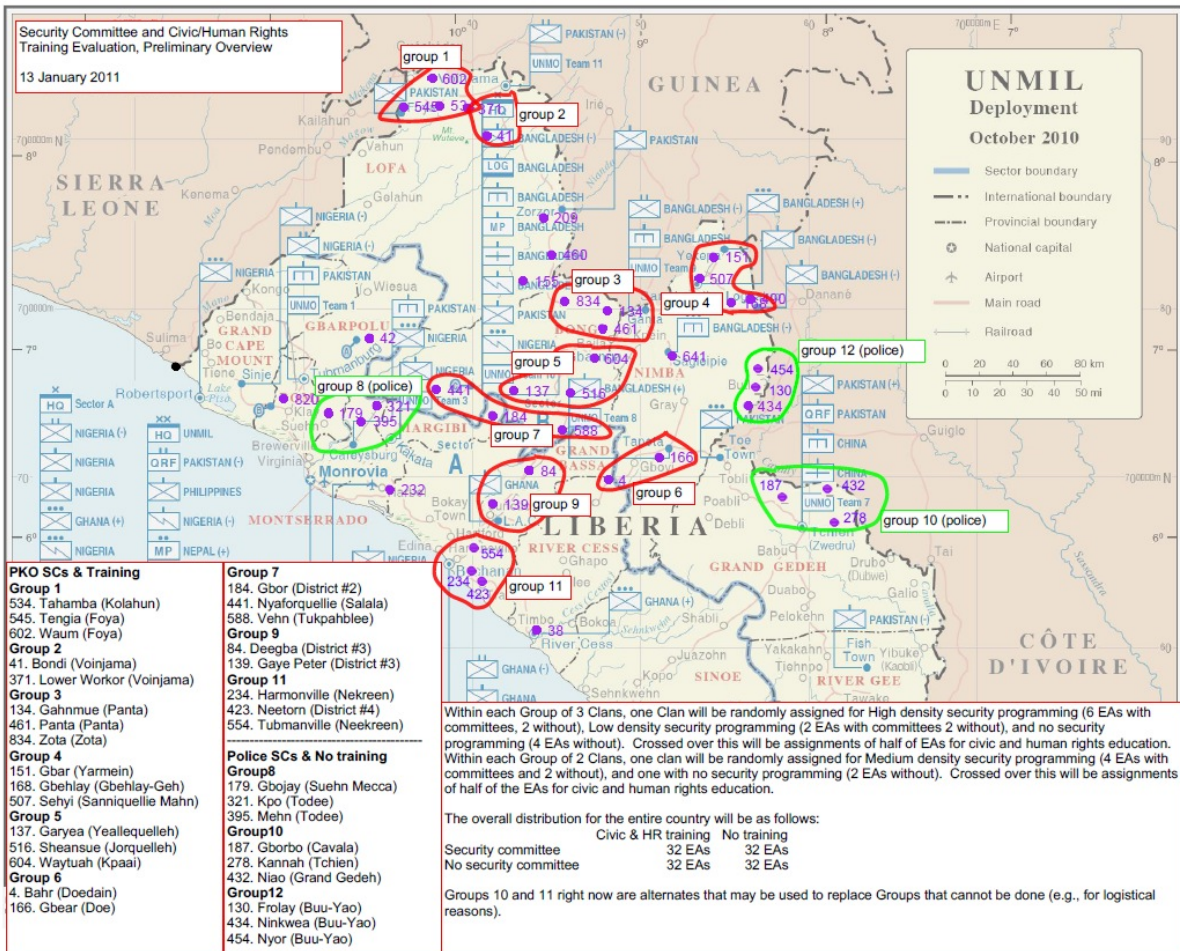
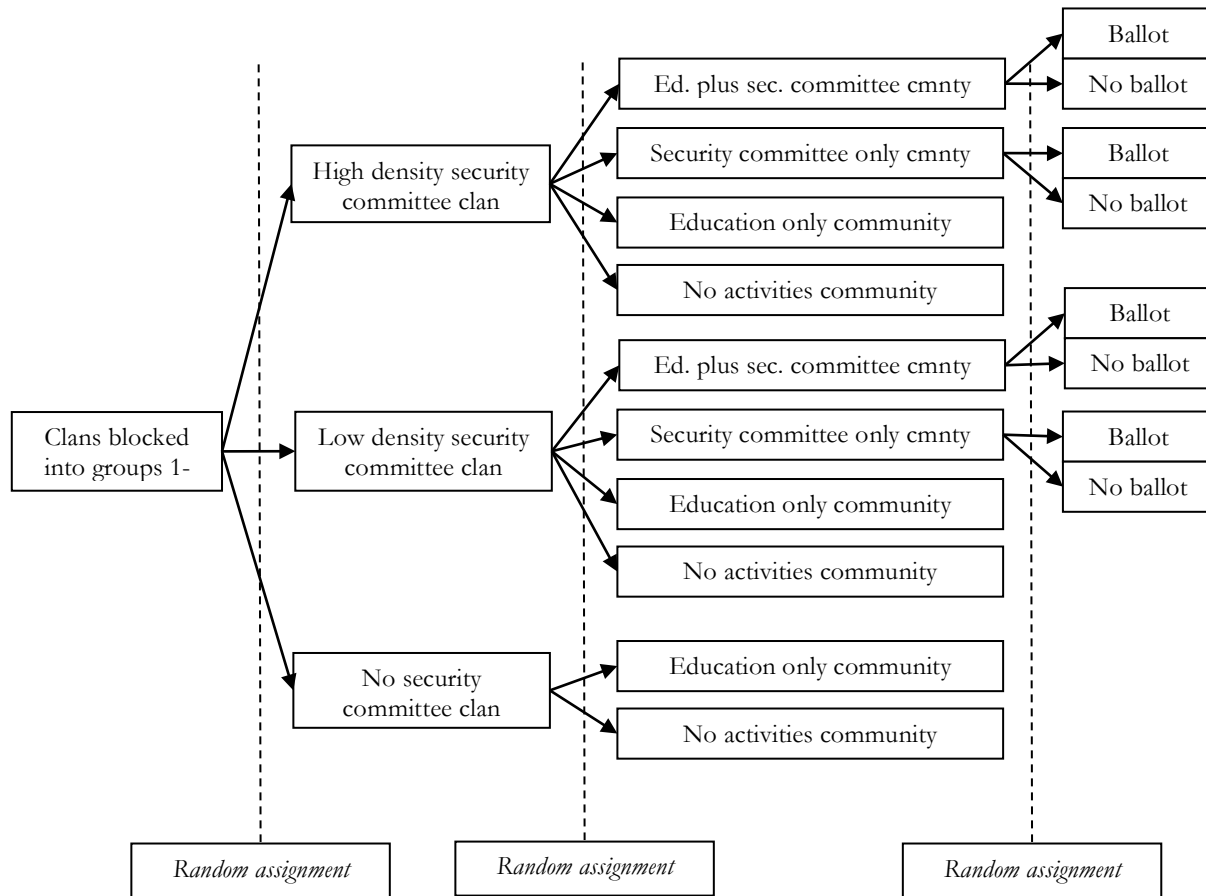


Figure 2: Order of randomization



Preliminary Analysis Appendix

This appendix contains basic cross-tabulations on outcomes. The goal of the preliminary analysis is to identify potential errors in data entry and other data issues as well as to suggest analyses that would supplement the primary analyses to be carried out according to the analysis plan.

Preliminary Analysis of Survey Data

For the tables of survey responses, approximate margins of error⁴ (moe) were determined by calculating intra-class correlation-based design effects for the outcomes reported below and using that to scale the margin of error that would obtain under simple random sampling (SRS). For a proportion, the SRS moe for the realized sample sizes for each program type were as follows: for “None”, 4 percentage points; for Civic Education only 8 percentage points, for Security Committee only, 4.5 percentage points, for Civic Education + Security Committee, 6 percentage points. Intra-class correlation estimates at the level of clustering (the community) suggest the need to scale this by between 10% and 200%.

⁴The moe is defined as one half of the maximum width of a design-based 95% confidence interval for a simple proportion under a normal approximation.

Set A: Survey Responses on Electoral Participation and Voting

Voter Registration

Program	No	Yes
a. None	3	97
b. Civ Ed	5	95
c. Sec Com	2	98
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	3	97

Voter turnout (self-reported)

Program	No	Yes
a. None	5	95
b. Civ Ed	8	92
c. Sec Com	5	95
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	4	96

Vote choice

Program	UP (ruling)	CDC (rival)	NUDP	(PJ)	LP	LTP	Other	No party	DK	R
a. None	54	23	17	2	0	1	1	0	1	
b. Civ Ed	66	15	12	1	1	1	1	0	3	
c. Sec Com	61	15	10	11	0	0	2	1	1	
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	70	14	7	5	0	0	2	0	1	

Set B: Survey Responses on Perceptions of Electoral Intimidation

Were the elections free and fair?

Program	No	Yes	DK	R
a. None	6	84	10	0
b. Civ Ed	5	80	15	0
c. Sec Com	7	80	13	0
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	7	83	9	0

How much did you fear being a victim during the elections?

Program	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all	DK	R
a. None	10	3	19	67	1	0
b. Civ Ed	11	6	23	58	1	1
c. Sec Com	11	4	19	65	0	0
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	10	5	15	69	2	0

Would you be in trouble if some big people find out how you voted?

Program	No	Yes	DK
a. None	81	17	2
b. Civ Ed	81	15	4
c. Sec Com	83	15	2
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	83	14	3

How often have you heard threats to force people to vote a certain way?

Program	Never	Sometimes	Often	DK	R
a. None	76	20	1	3	0
b. Civ Ed	70	21	1	8	0
c. Sec Com	80	15	1	3	0
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	84	13	1	3	0

How often have you heard appeals for people to use violence?

Program	Never	Sometimes	Often	DK	R
a. None	84	14	0	2	0
b. Civ Ed	81	11	0	6	1
c. Sec Com	86	10	1	3	0
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	89	8	0	3	0

Who could protect you in case you were threatened?

Program	No one	UNMIL	Police	Chief	Other	DK	R
a. None	2	27	46	16	7	2	0
b. Civ Ed	3	30	42	16	6	2	1
c. Sec Com	3	29	41	18	7	2	0
d. Civ Ed + Sec Com	2	29	39	21	6	2	0