

**Rwanda Threshold Program Evaluation:
Strengthening Civic Participation, RNP Inspectorate Services, and Media**

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September 24, 2010

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is a U.S. government agency that partners with developing countries committed to good governance, economic freedom, and investments in their citizens. MCC grants complement other U.S. and international development programs. There are two primary types of MCC grants: [compacts](#) and [threshold programs](#). Compacts are large, five-year grants for countries that pass MCC's [eligibility criteria](#) and Threshold programs are smaller grants awarded to countries that come close to passing these criteria and are firmly committed to improving their policy performance. Since its creation in 2004, MCC has approved more than \$7 billion in poverty-reduction compacts in more than 20 countries, and nearly \$500 million in policy-improvement threshold programs in about 23 countries.

MCC is sponsoring a threshold program in Rwanda aimed at strengthening a variety of democracy and governance indicators. The MCC board of directors announced Rwanda as a threshold country in November 2006. In October 2008, MCC signed a \$24.7 million threshold program with the government of Rwanda. The program, which focuses on improving political rights, civil liberties, civic participation, and government accountability in the country, aims to complement and reinforce Rwanda's own reform efforts and to improve Rwanda's performance on MCC's eligibility indicators.

The three-year MCC program supports the Rwandan government's efforts to strengthen civic participation, promote civil liberties and rights, and improve the judicial system. The program, which the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implements, provides training, technical support, and grants to local and national civil society organizations and expand citizen engagement by supporting independent community radio stations. In addition, the program is designed to reinforce Rwanda's efforts to improve the capacity of the judiciary and help enact legislative reforms that will strengthen civil liberties, human rights, and civic participation. Finally, the program provides training and technical assistance to journalists and the Rwandan National Police (RNP) in an effort to further transparency and professionalism.

This paper, prepared for the Experiments in Governance and Politics (EGAP) conference, aims to provide brief background on the intervention components and our proposed research design as we seek input from conference participants on both the research design and key outcomes to measure. Section A provides the Rwandan context as background for the study. Section B provides an overview of key interventions. Section C describes in greater detail the interventions that we will evaluate and briefly describes the evaluation designs we propose. Section D discusses some of the outcomes we propose to examine, and Section E describes some of the challenges related to the study. In Section F, we describe the questions on which we would particularly like to focus in seeking input of the conference participants.

A. Background and Context

Since gaining independence from Belgium in 1962, Rwanda has experienced political and civil turmoil over power and access to opportunities. Rwanda still bears deep scars as a result of the 1994 genocide and civil war, which claimed the lives of up to one million Rwandans. The 1994 genocide underscored the severity of tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. The effects of the genocide continue to reverberate today, and remembrance of the violent events of 1994 plays a major role in Rwanda's national identity as the Government of Rwanda (GOR) continues to prosecute perpetrators of the genocide both through the regular courts and the community-based *gacaca* system.

Since 1994, Rwanda's political progress has been halting and uneven. The GOR has largely succeeded in providing for national and internal security, a necessary precondition for political and economic development. In 2003, Rwanda held national and legislative elections, establishing Rwanda as a nominal democracy. However, many of the gains that have been realized over the past 14 years have been offset by persistent criticism from international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), human rights groups, and media organizations that the GOR is a de facto one-party state that stifles public dissent. Freedom House has classified Rwanda as "not free" and quotes some analysts who believe that Rwanda has become more repressive since the 2003 elections, in part due to the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party's increased strength across government branches. Recently, the GOR has responded to this criticism by relaxing restrictions on political organization at local levels, but it is clear that the consolidation of Rwanda's democratic institutions remains incomplete.

More controversially, the GOR has erected legally murky prohibitions against "genocide ideology" that have successfully prevented social strife but, at the same time, have also provided opportunities for government repression of legitimate political expression. For instance, fearing another violent release of ethnic tensions, the GOR severely limited freedom of expression for political parties, the media, and civil society (USAID 2005). Although a 2002 media law guaranteed freedom of the press, independent news coverage is minimal due to government intimidation and heavy reliance on government advertising (Committee to Protect Journalists 2009). Police harassment and intimidation have infringed upon the civil liberties of Rwandan citizens; the government has used laws against "divisionism" and "genocidal ideology" to persecute dissenters. In addition, the GOR faces a backlog of thousands of court cases related to the 1994 genocide, hampering the country's justice system. In fact, in a 2007 democracy and governance survey of nine sub-Saharan African countries, Rwanda scored below most others in the areas of accountability, public voice, rule of law, and civil liberties (Freedom House 2007).

Attention to good governance is essential for a strong economy, as it provides the setting for the equitable distribution of benefits from growth (United Nations 2009). Furthermore, decentralized accountability provides a regulatory framework that enables economic activities and growth (International Monetary Fund 2008). The GOR has been taking steps to address the country's civil liberties, political rights, and government accountability issues. For example, the World Bank noted that in September 2007 the GOR adopted an Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (World Bank 2009). One of the key programs within this strategy seeks to strengthen political and economic governance by building state capacity, public sector institutions, and regulatory and administrative frameworks for the country.

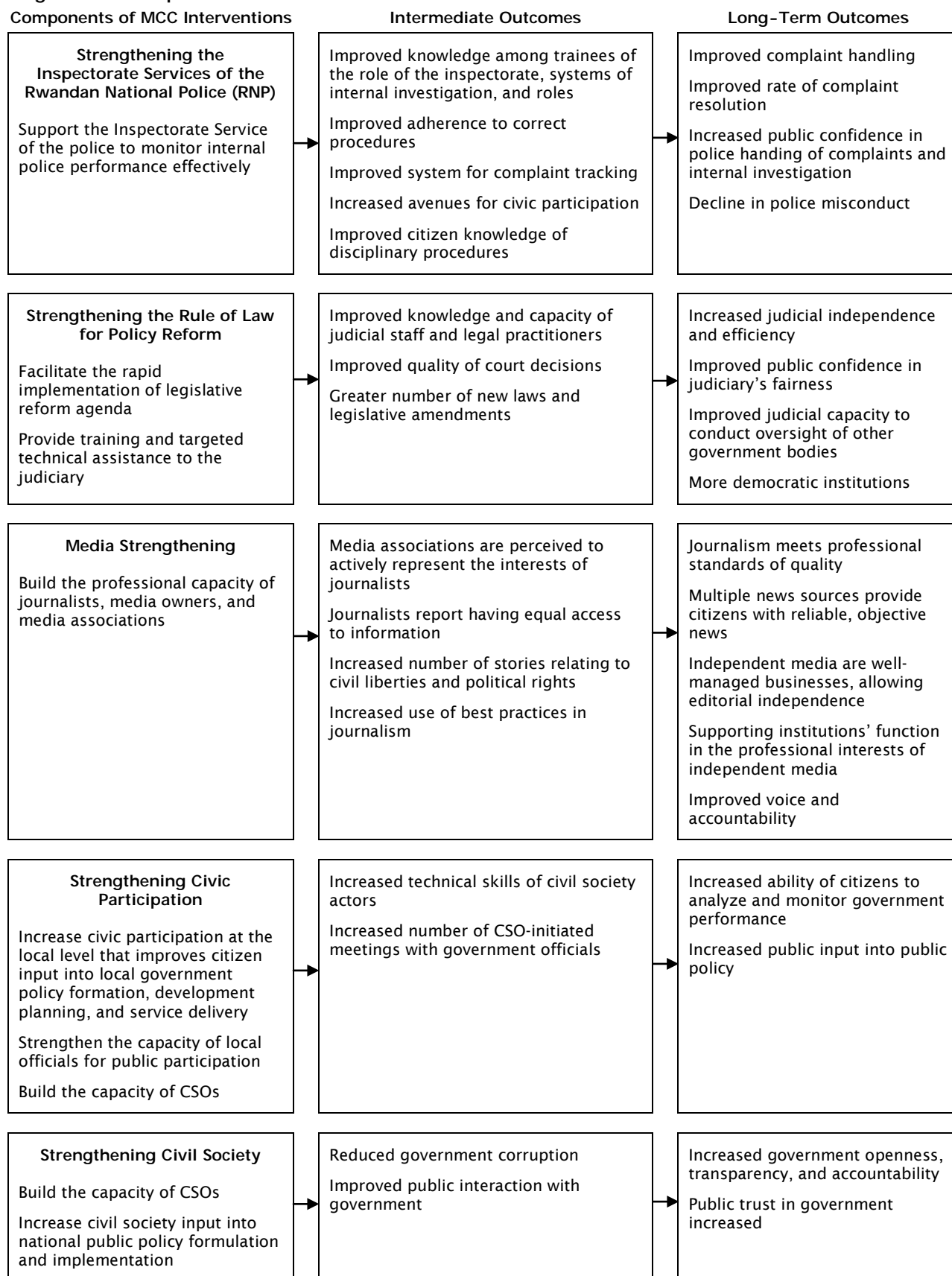
B. Overview of MCC Investments in Rwanda

MCC recognizes the Rwandan government's efforts to overcome the country's civil liberties, political rights, and voice and accountability challenges. The MCC Threshold Program in Rwanda has three broad components: (1) strengthening the judicial structure, (2) strengthening civic participation, and (3) promoting civil rights and liberties. The ultimate goals of these efforts are to strengthen the rule of law, civil liberties, and political rights, and to promote good governance and increased civic participation and policy making. In particular, the Rwanda Threshold Program (RTP) seeks to improve the country's judicial and legislative capacity; deliver training and technical assistance to the RNP to enhance transparency and professionalism; train Rwanda's journalists and members of the media to enhance their professionalism and skills; and provide training, technical support, and grants to civil society organizations (CSOs) at both the local and national levels to expand civic engagement.

Five core sets of activities contribute to these long-term outcomes, focusing on strengthening (1) the RNP Inspectorate Services, (2) the rule of law for policy reform, (3) the media, (4) civic participation, and (5) civil society. Figure 1 summarizes the key components of the five interventions, and their intended intermediate and long-term outcomes. Next, we briefly summarize the main focus of activities for each of these five core sets of activities; in the following section we highlight in greater detail the activities for three components that will be the focus of the evaluation.

- ***Strengthening the RNP Inspectorate Services.*** The RNP-strengthening program focuses primarily on establishing a public system, through the Office of Inspectorate Services, for collecting and resolving citizen complaints about police conduct. The program also provides training to RNP staff on internal investigation and internal audit methods and supports several public outreach activities of the RNP.
- ***Strengthening the Rule of Law for Policy Reform.*** The judicial-strengthening activities aim to build the capacity of the judiciary to render legally effective decisions with impartiality, fairness, and efficiency, without interference from other branches of government. The program will include a variety of education and training activities to train all professional judges in Rwanda in judicial decision-writing methods and redesign the Institute for Legal Practice and Development’s curriculum, providing training to faculty on adult education and curriculum development. The program will also develop a policy and procedures manual and provide technical assistance for a new legislative drafting unit for Parliament.
- ***Media Strengthening.*** Media-strengthening activities aim to promote free, responsible media in Rwanda by building the capacity of professional media associations and the skills of individual journalists, and to assist journalists to produce and utilize a national professional code of conduct.
- ***Strengthening Civic Participation.*** Goals in this area include strengthening and improving the government’s ability to interact productively with citizens and civil society to formulate policy and deliver services. The goals also seek to provide a system through which CSOs and individuals can offer feedback to the government on the conduct of civil servants and make recommendations about the code of conduct for civil servants.
- ***Strengthening Civil Society.*** The purpose of these activities are to enhance the technical skills of civil society actors in contributing to public policy and monitoring government performance in order to promote the independence of CSOs and their effective engagement with government and other institutions. Activities will include providing training and small grants to national and local CSOs to enhance their skills and for capacity building and participating in relevant activities.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



C. Overview of Evaluation Design

Several organizations are implementing the previously discussed activities. These include (1) the U.S. Department of Justice’s International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) implementing the RNP-strengthening program; (2) Chemonics implementing the Rule of Law strengthening component; (3) the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) implementing the media- and civil society-strengthening components; and (4) the Urban Institute (UI) implementing the strengthening civic participation components. MCC contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct an evaluation of the various components.

Following a review of each component, its implementation, various feasible design options, available data, and discussions with implementers, Mathematica and MCC determined that three of the five RTP programs could be feasibly evaluated in a more rigorous manner: (1) Strengthening RNP Inspectorate Services, (2) Media Strengthening, and (3) Strengthening Civic Participation. Table 2 shows the RTP components, specific activities, and proposed evaluation design.¹ In the following sections, we discuss the activities and the proposed evaluation designs in greater detail.

Table 2. Evaluation Designs for Targeted RTP Activities

RTP	Targeted Activity	Evaluation Design
Strengthening RNP Inspectorate Services	Collecting citizen complaints	Comparison group design
Media Strengthening	Supporting community radio	Pre-post design
Strengthening Civic Participation	Training district and sector government officials and CSOs	Pair-wise random assignment

1. Strengthening RNP Inspectorate Services

The RNP-strengthening program, known as “Every Voice Counts,” is a two-year initiative implemented by ICITAP. The program focuses primarily on establishing a public system, through the Office of Inspectorate Services, for collecting and resolving citizens’ complaints about police conduct. The program also provides training to RNP staff on internal investigation and internal audit methods and supports several public outreach activities of the RNP.

“Every Voice Counts” began in August 2009. One of the key activities under this program is the creation of “drop boxes” for complaints, wherein local residents can lodge their complaints or suggestions for improvements to the systems. Currently, there are about 230 drop boxes for complaints posted in 25 districts. The program will eventually distribute a total of about 250 boxes

¹ Our assessment was that it would be very difficult to conduct any type of quasi-experimental assessment of the Strengthening the Rule of Law component or the Strengthening Civil Society component (or any of the activities within these components). This is largely driven by the nature of the intervention or how it is being rolled out (typically the issue is that very small numbers of participants/organizations are treated, and usually they all will be offered the intervention at the same time).

across all 30 districts in Rwanda.² Each complaint box is posted in a public space (for example, local government administrative buildings, universities, or medical facilities). A complaint box is typically introduced to local residents by a community leader, either during the installation of the box (if an audience is present) or during a local administrative meeting. Each box is prominently labeled with filing instructions and includes forms that solicit complaints or compliments about the police.



An RNP complaint drop box mounted in Kigali.

The evaluation of this component will use a comparison group design. We determined that random assignment was not feasible given that the program had already rolled out in most districts by the time the evaluation planning started. Thus, our goals are to use a comparison group design to assess the effects of the complaint system on citizens' knowledge of RNP disciplinary procedures and confidence in how the RNP handles complaints. In this comparison group design, we will select households that live near the posted complaint boxes as our "treatment" sample. The comparison group would include either (1) citizens living in sectors (political subdivisions within a district) that do not have complaint boxes or (2) citizens who have complaint boxes in their sectors but live in other cells or villages than the one in which the complaint box has been placed.

Given that each district has approximately 15 sectors, our slight preference is to identify a different sector (or sectors) in the district that do not have complaint boxes as the matched comparison group. However, if sectors within a district vary a lot (by size, the characteristics of the population, and so on), we will assess whether we can match on some sector-level characteristics to ensure two comparable groups. If sectors within a district are very different and there are no good matches to sectors with complaint boxes placed, we will consider using the same sector, but include as a comparison sample people in other cells or villages than the ones in which the boxes have been placed. (The actual determination will depend on how the sectors vary within a district, the information available to match sectors, the size of the sectors, and other such factors).

Our plans are to conduct a large-scale, nationwide survey of citizens to collect data on their knowledge of disciplinary procedures and confidence in police handling of complaints.³ As noted, using a sector-level sampling frame, the evaluation team will identify sectors that contain collection boxes and compare them with sectors that do not. In addition, we also use cell- (subdivisions of

² The administrative divisions in Rwanda are as follows. Rwanda is organized into five provinces and subdivided into 30 districts. The 30 districts consist of 416 sectors. These sectors are further subdivided into 2,148 cells, which consist of villages (for a total of 15,000 villages).

³ Our current plans are to conduct two rounds of surveys—one as a baseline and the other an endline. We will conduct the surveys to answer questions related not only to this component, but also to other relevant program components. The samples will be selected, and relevant questions will be included in the questionnaire, to enable us to answer questions related to the effectiveness of these three main components and the overall effects of the various interventions as part of this program.

sectors) or village-level sampling frames within selected sectors to contrast a sample of citizens located close to collection boxes with a sample of citizens located further away. One concern with this design is that, because the complaint system has already been partially implemented, it is not possible to collect true baseline data for the program. However, conducting this survey in two phases—once while the ICITAP assistance program is still in place and again after the program ends—may provide useful descriptive evidence of changes in outcomes over time. In addition, we will try to use as many sector-level (or cell-level) controls in our analysis to try to adjust for any existing differences in the sectors that already have complaint boxes.⁴

2. Media Strengthening

The Media-Strengthening Program, a two-year initiative implemented by IREX, focuses primarily on building professional journalism skills. The program includes a number of secondary activities, such as providing information technology (IT) instruction and equipment to educational centers, conducting business and marketing workshops for media organizations, establishing two new community radio stations, promoting youth media activities, and supporting organizational capacity building for Rwanda’s four media associations. A secondary activity is to establish two new community radio stations to support the dissemination of news from nongovernmental sources.

Given the nature of the interventions, the most feasible design for this component is a pre-post design. The evaluation would sample citizens living in the broadcast regions of the two RTP-supported radio stations (we will also explore the feasibility of developing a comparison group of people who do not receive radio broadcasts, however, we suspect this will be challenging). Conducting data collection at two points in time would permit a “pre” and a “post” comparison—we propose to conduct the baseline survey before the beginning of station operations and would complete the follow-up survey one year after programming begins. The survey would obtain data on citizens’ awareness of community radio programming and local current affairs, and assess whether the programming improved citizens’ access to reliable, objective local news.



USAID, MCC, and Mathematica staff meet with community radio board members in Gicumbi.

⁴ In addition, we will also explore the feasibility of accessing RNP administrative data on complaint filings and disciplinary actions. If these data become available, it might be possible to supplement the findings from our survey with a descriptive analysis of trends in the number and types of citizen complaint filings, the RNP’s actions in response to filings, and the resolution of complaints.

3. Strengthening Civic Participation

The local civic participation program, implemented by UI, is a three-year initiative with two focus areas: (1) supporting the efforts of CSOs to advocate for local issues and (2) training local government officials to increase responsiveness to the concerns and priorities of citizens.

The program provides assistance to local government officials and CSOs. First, UI conducted a baseline diagnostic assessment of needs within each district. This diagnostic helps program staff assess the capacity of the government and CSOs to participate in civic activities at the district level and also within a subset of two or three sectors within each district (on average, each district has 15 sectors). The results of the diagnostic will also assist UI in developing district-specific work plans for training activities targeting civil society and local government officials.

In addition to activities targeting the district and sector needs identified by the diagnostic, UI plans to provide every district with support related to participatory budgeting, citizen report cards, and community scorecards. The participatory budgeting activities will initially focus on simplifying national-level budget information provided by the Ministry of Planning and providing synthesized information, translated into Kinyarwanda, for local government staff and CSOs.

The program will eventually reach all 30 districts in Rwanda and is being implemented in two phases. As part of Phase 1, 15 districts will receive the program in Year 1; the remaining 15 districts will receive the program in Year 2. Phase I districts will also receive input on the fiscal year (FY) 2011–2012 district development plans, which will be used in the budget planning process slated to begin in January 2011. Because certain activities will be more intensively conducted in two or three sectors, it might be possible to randomly select which sectors would receive the program; however, program activities taking place at the district level would likely create spillover effects on sectors that had not been specifically targeted for extra activities.

UI has implemented a pair-wise random selection process, assigning districts to Phase I and Phase II. This process divided each province's districts evenly between the two phases, stratifying the random selection process within each province to ensure the best possible match between the two phases on the following characteristics:

- Population change between 2002 and 2006
- Population density
- Common Development Fund (CDF) appropriation amounts for FY 2008 (as a proxy for poverty levels)
- Share of district spending obtained through local revenues in FY 2008
- District expenditure per capita on good governance and social affairs

Within each province, UI matched districts in pairs or groups of three, seeking the best possible matches across the five characteristics. UI then used a public lottery selection procedure to assign

districts within each pairing to Phase I or Phase II. This nationwide selection process was completed in June 2010.⁵

We describe the final district assignments reported by UI in Table 2.

Table 2. District Assignments for the Civic Participation Program

District	Phase I	Phase II
Northern Province	Gicumbi Gakenke Burera	Rulindo Musanze
Western Province	Karongi Nyabihu Rutsiro Ngororero	Rusizi Rubayu Nyamasheke
Southern Province	Nyaruguru Gisagare Nyanza Ruhango	Nyamagabe Kamonyi Huye Muhanga
Eastern Province	Rwamagana Bugesera Kirehe	Ngoma Nyagatare Gatsibo Kayonza
Kigali City	Gasabo	Kicukiro Nyarugenge

As previously discussed, the program has randomly assigned 15 districts to Phase I program activities and the remaining 15 districts to Phase II activities, scheduled to begin in the program’s second year. We will complete a baseline citizen survey before program activities begin in late 2010, followed by an outcome survey before Phase II activities begin a year later. This process will enable us to compare a treatment group of districts and a control group of districts to determine the program’s impacts on how citizens analyze, monitor, and



Gathering civic participation project details at the Urban Institute’s Butare field office.

⁵ We have analyzed the data and did not find statistically significant differences between the Phase I and Phase II districts on any of the characteristics used in the pair-wise matching process, suggesting that the random assignment process successfully established treatment and control groups of districts with baseline equivalence on each of the characteristics for which data is available.

provide input on local policymaking decisions. Using a dual-frame sample at the district and sector levels would also enable us to detect and differentiate between impacts created on a district-wide basis and more local impacts observed only in sectors that directly received program activities. In addition, we will stratify the survey sample to ensure adequate representation of three groups: ordinary citizens, citizens targeted by the program, and other stakeholders (such as NGOs or local officials). This approach will enable us to answer questions about how the program affects each group.

D. Outcome Measures

The evaluation designs envision a nationwide citizen survey, first conducted in fall 2010 and again in fall 2011. We would use this survey to gather data on citizens’ perceptions, knowledge, and behavior in order to assess the effectiveness of three of the five RTP programs. In the following section, we briefly review the research designs for assessing whether component activities are achieving intended objectives.

We identify the primary outcomes of interest for the RTP in Table 3 (we described other intermediate and longer-term outcomes measures in the conceptual framework in Table 1). More refinement of outcome measures will take place during discussions with implementers and survey pre-tests.

Table 3. Evaluation Outcomes of Interest

Program	Outcomes of Interest
Strengthening RNP Inspectorate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A better understanding among citizens regarding disciplinary procedures • Improved confidence in how the police handle complaints • Perceptions of improved police conduct
Media Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of community radio station broadcasts and programming • Knowledge of local current affairs • Access to reliable and objective news sources
Strengthening Civic Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ability of citizens to analyze and monitor government performance • Improved knowledge of mechanisms and opportunities for citizen participation • Increased public input into local policymaking and governance • Increased satisfaction with government service provision

E. Challenges

Collecting data from individuals on sensitive outcomes is challenging in any context. It is unclear, however, in this context whether well-used methods for asking sensitive questions—such as placement, demonstrating relevance to the research purpose, reassuring respondents of confidentiality, and diplomatic wording—will have the desired effect and prompt open and honest

disclosure. The context in Rwanda that could limit respondents' willingness to respond truthfully to questions about the rule of law, media, and civic participation include a repressive government, a culture of deference to authority, and the lasting effects of the genocide and ethnic tension. Combined, these might result in respondents who are reluctant to be seen as critical of the government and who are fearful of expressing negative opinions.

There are examples of successful data collection efforts on sensitive topics in Rwanda. Most of these focus specifically on the genocide and its impact, however. Respondents might be more willing to provide information about this topic given the government and other institutions' extensive programs aimed at discussion of this event and reconciliation. It might be possible to build on those methods to develop survey questions and procedures that promote more honest, less biased responses. Triangulation could also be an effective method to determine if responses are biased. For example, direct observation of participation in key informant interviews might help to refine survey questions and procedures and interpret survey results.

F. Discussion

1. Do the identified outcome measures capture issues of interest to the EGAP community (given the projects under investigation)?
2. Are the identified data collection methods adequate to assess changes in the stated outcomes of interest? For example, for the evaluation of the civic participation component, we contemplate pairing survey data with direct observation of public meetings.
3. Are either of the comparison group designs for the police activity particularly stronger?
4. Given the hilly topography, is it worth exploring a natural experiment of hill (treatment) and valley (comparison) communities for the radio program?

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