Chief for a Day: Elite Capture and Management Performance

Evidence from a Field Experiment in Sierra Leone

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Abstract: This paper uses a field experiment in Sierra Leone to examine how the identity of the manager influences rent seeking and performance in participatory development projects. Specifically, we vary the composition of the committee responsible for implementing a development project—local elites or randomly selected villagers. The design is unique, in that it permits us to explore the effectiveness of two alternative local governance modalities and the extent of elite capture in community projects. We find little evidence that local elites capture project resources, but we do observe they are better managers of development projects. Improved performance co-varies with our proxy for power of the local chief.

1. Introduction

While mismanagement and bad governance at the macro or state level is widely regarded as a leading explanation for African underdevelopment (e.g., Herbst, 2000), little economic literature focuses on the role of management of development projects at the local level. This is unfortunate because the capacity of central states to intervene in local matters is often limited, and lower tiers of government—predominantly chiefs—have considerable autonomy in issues of economic importance. These include taxation, the allocation of resources (including land), and the operation of the front line of the judicial system (e.g., Mokuwa et al., 2011). The quality of local governance may affect investment behavior of villagers, and shape local development trajectories (Beekman, et al., 2013, 2014). The scant evidence that exists to describe the quality of lower-tier management in Africa suggests chiefs are unaccountable "despots" (e.g., Mamdani, 1996; Acemoglu, et al., 2013). Indeed, colonial systems of indirect rule, where elites received formal authority from the colonial government, allowed chiefs to avoid accountability to their local constituencies (Boone, 2003), facilitating the appropriation of communal resources. For analyses of the persistence of (*de facto*) elite power, via systems of clientelism or otherwise, refer to Acemoglu and Robinson (2008) or Anderson et al. (2014).

The issue of management at the local level has gained import in recent years because of the increasing popularity among donors and development agencies of so-called Participatory Development Projects (PDPs). PDPs include Community Driven Development (CDD) initiatives that encourage local responsibility for service delivery or resource management, as well as efforts to decentralize authority and resources to local

formal and informal institutions, while at the same time improving the representativeness, inclusiveness, accountability and effectiveness of those institutions. The popularity of such efforts increased after donors learned that states often failed to provide the resources necessary for development (Bardhan, 2002), and that aid sometimes vanished at high rates before reaching targeted recipients (Olken, 2006; Reinikka and Svensson, 2004). Participatory projects were also seen as creating more "sustainable" development as they were expected to empower local actors (Binswanger-Mkhize, et al, 2009), and produce interventions that are better aligned with local priorities, ambitions, and constraints. In the last ten years, the World Bank alone has invested USD 85 billion in participatory approaches (Mansuri and Rao, 2012). The World Bank wants to put "*poor people at the center of service provision: by enabling them to monitor and discipline service providers, by amplifying their voice in policy-making, and by strengthening the incentives for providers to serve the poor*" (World Bank, 2004). Such efforts put tremendous resources in the hands of project managers often with limited experience. Managing large sums of money, with no formal training, scant accountability, and divergent constituencies is challenging. Oftentimes these initiatives explicitly empower social groups outside the traditional power structure as a way of limiting elite capture and increasing sustainability. This could potentially exacerbate management as management experience may be lower than that of local elites.

While participatory development initially seemed to increase the efficacy of aid (e.g., Haddinott, et al, 2001, Dongier et al., 2003), critics soon emerged (see, e.g., Mansuri and Rao, 2004; Platteau, 2004). A clear theoretical basis is absent for expecting more efficient and equitable outcomes (Abraham and Platteau, 2002; Bardhan and

Mookherjee, 2000; 2005; 2006a). One prominent reason is the potentially predatory behavior of local elites, which may invite inefficiencies, inequitable distribution, and regressive instead of pro-poor targeting (Baird, et al, 2011). Evidence is emerging on three potentially problematic dimensions of PDPs in particular: (i) the mechanism for project selection, (ii) leakage and elite capture, and (iii) leadership ability and the coordination of collective action to implement any particular project. An overarching concern is that local elites are able to "capture" participatory development interventions, and convert resources intended for communal development or set aside for disenfranchised social groups into private gains for themselves (Bardhan, 2002; Guggerty and Kremer, 2008).

This paper seeks to bridge the economic literatures on local level governance (including the role of chiefs) and the efficacy of participatory development interventions. We have two main objectives. First, to examine the extent of input diversion in the management of a participatory development intervention in Sierra Leone. Akin to the pioneering work of Beath et al. (2013b), we seek to compare diversion of project resources by the elite versus that of a committee of villagers.[1] Second, we explore whether alternative governance modalities—bypassing local elites—may be more effective in promoting local development than channeling aid resources via the chief. We focus on project management rather than project selection, complementing work by Olken (2010), Labonne and Chase (2009), and Beath et al. (2013a).

As an auxiliary objective, we also probe whether the impact of PDPs varies systematically across receiving villages. Specifically, we examine the hypothesis that

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[1] For cross-country studies of (fiscal and political) decentralization and levels of corruption, refer to Fisman and Gatti (2002) and Fan et al. (2009).

chief power is a factor that explains differences in project performance. Writing about efforts by NGOs to bypass public institutions, Uvin (2008, p.117) writes "*parallel structures of decision-making and resource allocation are perceived as threatening by local (…) government: uncontrolled by them, in charge of major resources, duplicative of public structures, they are typically resented, sabotaged, undermined…*". If the traditional hierarchy feels threatened by a new management regime, perhaps because it complicates the diversion of project resources, then local elites may try to undermine the committee's efforts to manage the project, signaling to villagers and NGOs that future projects should again be implemented via the elite (Labonte 2012). More powerful local elites may be better able to successfully undermine PDP initiatives.

To explore these issues, we conducted a field experiment in rural Sierra Leone in which we varied the management structure associated with a PDP. Specifically, in a random subsample of villages the traditional elite, including the chief, were made responsible for project management. In other villages, responsibility for project management was delegated to a committee of randomly selected villagers. By comparing the performance of the PDP intervention across the two types of villages, we learn how project governance affects both the performance of PDPs and the diversion of project inputs (one form of rent capture). More generally, our experimental design allows us to evaluate the robustness of the "chief as despot" thesis.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section we describe the theoretical framework, summarize the existing evidence on PDPs, and present a simple theoretical model to guide interpretation of the empirical section. In section 3, we sketch the institutional context of our study. Section 4 outlines the

experimental design, summarize our data, and introduce our identification strategy. Section 5 contains our results. We report average treatment effects, but also examine how the intervention's impact varies across villages with hierarchies that hold more and less concentrated power. Section 6 concludes.

2. Theory: Participatory Development

Participatory development projects are now commonly implemented in countries that lack a stable central state government or adequate institutions capable of reaching communities in the "hinterland". Recent empirical evidence, however, casts doubt on the ability of PDPs to promote sustainable and equitable development.

Two recent large-scale and rigorous evaluation studies, one conducted in Sierra Leone and the other in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have quantified the impact of community-driven development efforts on a range of indicators (Humphreys et al. 2013, Casey et al. 2012). In both studies, new institutions were created and supported at the local level—village councils through which considerable resources were channeled. Both studies report similar results: the interventions achieved little in terms of improved local governance, social cohesion, or welfare. Therefore, it seems difficult to create a set of effective parallel institutions in a context with pre-existing traditional hierarchies.

We identify several reasons why PDPs may fail to reach their stated objectives. Giving more control to communities over *project selection* potentially entails significant benefits. Locals have better information about their own needs and consequently selected projects may be better suited to local conditions. For example, some evidence suggests that communities can successfully identify the poor who most deserve to be program

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beneficiaries (Alatas, et al, 2012; Galasso and Ravallion, 2005). People also have the benefit of feeling empowered, which may be an end in-and-of-itself, even if indicators of program outcomes are unaffected (e.g., Beath, et al, 2013b; Olken, 2010; see Dal Bo et al, 2010 for evidence from the lab).

There are risks in allowing communities control over project selection, however. If there is disagreement on development priorities a voting mechanism may be used, leaving the potential for disenfranchisement among minority members of the community (Foster and Rosenzweig, 2004). High-status people may force others to choose their preferred project at the expense of those most in need of the project.[2] Such problems may be particularly pressing in settings where leaders are not accountable to their constituency.

Problems associated with the *control of project resources* may also emerge. It is generally assumed that accountability increases when project management occurs locally, where intended beneficiaries frequently interact with managers (e.g. Fisman and Gatti 2002). However, competence of managers also matters. Moreover, when responsibility for project implementation is given to the local community, resources are placed within the control of people who typically are severely resource constrained, facing the obvious utilitarian motive to divert some of these resources for private consumption or for investing in pre-existing patron-client networks (see Chhotray, 2004; Platteau and Abraham, 2010). While this can be counteracted somewhat with greater transparency (e.g., Ferraz et al, 2012; Reinikka and Svensson, 2003) or accountability to outside authority (e.g., Olken, 2007; Platteau and Gaspart, 2003a; 2003b), elite capture in

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[2] A perhaps paternalistic concern is that communities may not know the best strategies for development, or lack self-control or political will to implement these. In such case, top-down project implementation could lead to greater gains in welfare.

development projects remains a central concern in the literature (e.g., Burgess, et al, 2012; Caridad Araujo, et al, 2008; Das Gupta and Beard, 2007; Fritzen, 2007; Kundu, 2011; and Takasaki, 2011). Comparing embezzlement by customary leaders and elected councils, Beath et al. (2013b) obtain a nuanced set of results. While elected councils may improve the quality of local governance (presumably because of the selection of better candidates), overlapping mandates between newly created councils and customary leaders create a common pool problem which may foster rent seeking.

Finally, we can consider problems at the *implementation* stage of PDPs. Insofar as communities reap the full benefits of their success (and incur the cost of failures), PDPs may eliminate the divergent incentives characteristic of complex principle-agent problems. However, transferring responsibility for project implementation to local communities introduces other risks and may, for example, aggravate problems of collective action. Perverse incentives to free ride off the contributions of others exist in homogeneous societies, and this problem is even more pronounced in heterogeneous communities. Community monitoring efforts might address this issue, but it is not always evident that people connected in social networks —playing a repeated game—are willing to punish each other. It is therefore not surprising that efforts to increase community monitoring have shown disappointing or mixed results (Banerjee, et al, 2008; Bjorkman and Svensson, 2009; Duflo, et al, 2012, Olken 2007).

2.1 A simple model to motivate the empirics

To guide interpretation of our empirical results we now present a simple two-period model that highlights the key tradeoffs for the chief (as a manager, or otherwise). First consider the case where the chief (or the elite, assuming away intra-elite coordination

issues) is charged with the responsibility of managing a development project of size R.
The chief has two choice variables: the share α of the project resources that will be
diverted or grabbed for private gain, and the chief's managerial effort, e, to turn the
project into a success. We assume the chief does not intrinsically care about the project,
which is expected to yield a flow of benefits for the community at large (but the model is
readily augmented to allow the valuation of project output by the chief). The chief's
problem reads as follows:

$$\text{Max } V = f(e) + \alpha R - c(e, \alpha; \tau) + p(e)\pi^* + (1 - p(e))\hat{\pi}, \qquad (1)$$

where $f(e)$ denotes the gain from effort allocated to the chief's private business (farm
work, else), which is negatively affected by more time spent on management of the
community project (hence: $\frac{\partial f}{\partial e} < 0, \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial e^2} < 0$). In (1), $c(e;\alpha,\tau)$ is a measure of potential
opposition from disgruntled villagers in case not enough managerial effort is supplied
(jeopardizing the success of the project), or when too much of the project resources are
taken by the chief. We assume $\frac{\partial c}{\partial e} < 0$ and $\frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial e^2} > 0$, and also $\frac{\partial c}{\partial \alpha} > 0$ and $\frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial \alpha^2} > 0$. The
parameter τ is a measure of the chief's power, so we assume $\frac{\partial c}{\partial \tau} < 0, \frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial e \partial \tau} > 0$ and
$\frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial \alpha \partial \tau} < 0$, or that more powerful managers have less opposition to fear – at the margin –
than weak chiefs from undersupplying effort or input grabbing. We denote the probability
that the chief is invited by an NGO to manage next period's development project with
$p(e)$, where $\frac{\partial p}{\partial e} > 0$ and $\frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial e^2} < 0$. Finally, π* denotes the (discounted) private payoffs in
period 2 in case the chief assumes responsibility to manage the community project, and $\hat{\pi}$
denotes payoffs for the chief when the management responsibility, instead, is delegated to
a committee of villagers. In the latter case, the scope for diverting project resources by

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the chief is lower, hence we assume the chief always prefers to be appointed as manager

(that is: $\pi^* > \hat{\pi}$).

The first order conditions for an optimal solution to the chief's problem are:

$$R - \frac{\partial c}{\partial \alpha} = 0, \text{ and} \tag{2}$$

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial e} - \frac{\partial c}{\partial e} + \frac{\partial p}{\partial e}(\pi^* - \hat{\pi}) = 0. \tag{3}$$

Taking a total differential of (2), we obtain

$$\frac{d\alpha}{d\tau} = \left(\frac{-\partial^2 c}{\partial \alpha \partial \tau}\right) / \left(\frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial \alpha^2}\right) > 0, \tag{4}$$

or, intuitively, that more powerful chiefs steal a greater fraction of the project inputs.

Similarly, taking the total differential of (3) and rewriting yields:

$$\frac{de}{d\tau} = \left(\frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial e \partial \tau}\right) / \left(\frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial e^2} - \frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial e^2} + \frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial e^2}(\pi^* - \hat{\pi})\right) < 0. \tag{5}$$

In words, powerful chiefs supply less effort to manage the project. The intuition for (3)

and (4) is simply that powerful chiefs are to a greater extent insulated or protected from

unhappy responses from their dissatisfied constituency.

Next, consider the case where a council of villagers is charged with the

responsibility of managing the community project. Assume this undermines the chief's

short-term scope for diverting project inputs – we consider for simplicity the extreme

case where α=0. Again, we denote by $p(\cdot)$ the probability that the chief is promoted to

manager in the second period. If so, the chief can again grab project inputs (α>0), so we

again assume $\pi^* > \hat{\pi}$. We also assume the chief's probability of being invited to manage

the future project is larger when the committee project fails in period 1. Denote by s any

effort by the chief to sabotage, undermine, or derail the committee's project. He may

achieve this, for example, by convincing fellow villagers not to work for the project, or

by denying complementary resources under his control (including land). As before, we assume the villagers are unhappy about anti-social behavior of the chief, and that they are better able to express their unhappiness (at some cost $c(\cdot)$ to the chief) when the chief is not powerful. This results in the following maximization problem for the chief:

$$\text{Max } V = -c(s;\tau) + p(s)\pi^* + (1 - p(s))\hat{\pi}. \tag{6}$$

The first-order solution reads as

$$-\frac{\partial c}{\partial s} + \frac{\partial p}{\partial s}(\pi^* - \hat{\pi}) = 0, \tag{7}$$

So that, from the total differential, it follows that:

$$\frac{ds}{d\tau} = \left(\frac{\partial^2 c}{\partial s \partial \tau}\right) \Big/ \left(\frac{-\partial^2 c}{\partial e^2} + \frac{\partial^2 p}{\partial e^2}(\pi^* - \hat{\pi})\right) > 0. \tag{8}$$

In words: more powerful chiefs will behave worse, and try harder to sabotage the committee's project. The intuition, again, is that they are insulated from unhappy responses from disgruntled villagers.

Note that our simple model does not produce an *ex ante* prediction of the expected performance of the chief versus the committee. Among other things, this will depend on the production function translating managerial effort into managerial output, which may be different for the chief and the committee, depending on skills or capacity of the managing agency. Project performance also depends on (subjective) expectations regarding future management responsibilities, and on sabotage efforts of the chief. Relative performance is an empirical issue we will return to below. However, the model does produce the hypotheses that (i) more powerful chiefs will divert more project resources, (ii) invest less effort in managing the project, and (iii) allocate more effort to undermining the performance of the committee.

After discussing the Sierra Leone context in more detail, we will take these model predictions to the data.

3. The Study Region: Rural Sierra Leone

With this backdrop in mind, we conducted a field experiment in rural Sierra Leone to explore the impacts of alternative local management structures on the implementation of a real PDP. The study country is particularly illustrative for such an investigation. Sierra Leone is recovering from a civil war that lasted for more than a decade. The timing of the war was associated with a large increase in aid flows that have remained high after the war ended in 2002. In 2011, Sierra Leone received aid worth USD 71 per capita, placing it sixty-sixth out of 138 recipient countries (CIA Factbook, 2014). Notwithstanding this international support effort, Sierra Leone continues to score low in terms of conventional development indicators. For example, its Human Development Index score places it 177th out of 186 countries (UNDP, 2014), and life expectancy in Sierra Leone in 2013 is 57 years, 199th out of 223 countries (CIA Factbook, 2014).

The field experiment takes place in villages in rural eastern Sierra Leone, governed by traditional institutions and dominated by local elites—a chief, a council of elders, a women's leader, a youth leader, a village imam, etc. Sierra Leone has been characterized as a ranked lineage society, where local elites (referred to as "Taa Gbakoi" in the local Mende language) control access to land, labor and marriage (Richards 2005). This hierarchical feature coupled with the polygamous nature of these societies is conducive to the clustering of power in the hands of a small number of ruling families. A

recurring theme in the literature on Sierra Leone is that the exploitative behavior of local elites caused widespread grievances, especially among disenfranchised rural youths with little stake in development, possibly contributing to the start of the war (e.g., Richards, 2005; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008; Mokuwa et al., 2011; Labonte 2012).

Sierra Leone has a multi-layer chief system that runs in parallel to the formal state apparatus. The country consists of 149 chiefdoms, governed by a so-called paramount chief from a hereditary "ruling house." Only individuals from "established" families, recognized and appointed by the British colonial ruler in the late 19th century, are eligible to run for the chieftaincy even today. Acemoglu et al. (2013) use the number of ruling houses at the chiefdom level (i.e. the number of potential challengers for the chieftaincy) as a proxy for the power of the chief. They hypothesize that a greater number of potential challengers will induce a chief to distribute chiefdom resources more widely to garner the support necessary to stay in office, diluting the concentration of power. Their main result is that more powerful chiefs provide fewer public goods, and have significantly worse development outcomes.

This finding supports the "chief as despot" perspective, and complements the dismal picture that other authors have painted of the undemocratic and grabbing nature of the public sector in Sierra Leone (e.g., Reno, 1995).[3] In contrast, ethnic divisions do not appear to be a factor contributing to underdevelopment or under-provision of public goods (Glennerster, et al., 2013).

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[3] The results of Acemoglu et al. (2013) extend beyond the finding that more powerful chiefs provide less public goods (presumably because of greater diversion of resources). Chiefs are also able to engineer or structure institutions and civil society at the local level to enhance and cement their grip on the lives of their underlings via patron-client networks.

Each chiefdom consists of sections, which in turn consist of villages. These villages are governed by a lower-tier chief, called the village chief or town chief. This village chief is the focus of our analysis, complementing the perspective on chiefdom-level governance in Acemoglu et al. (2013). Unlike the paramount chief, who is elected by a council, village chiefs are elected by taxpaying villagers, from a pool of native families. The village chief's main responsibilities include settling disputes, organizing public goods (e.g., farming on a communal plot or plantation, and promoting village cleanliness), and lobbying organizations that could be potential donors to bring resources into the village. The chief, perhaps together with supporting local elites, traditionally manage public good provision of the sort intended by donors who implement PDPs.

Village chiefs are accountable to their village. If a majority of the taxpaying population is unsatisfied with their chief, they can try to remove him through higher-up layers in the traditional leadership system (specifically, through the Section Chief and Chiefdom Committee—see Labonte 2012).[4] There are limits to the democratic nature of local governance, however. As with the election of paramount chiefs, not all villagers are eligible for the position of village chief. Candidates should be from a "chiefly family" (Labonte 2012), which in the context of Eastern Sierra Leone implies that only representatives of local landowning and tax-paying families can be considered. This excludes a significant fraction of the population. For example, "strangers" cannot run for chief. Strangers are villagers who joined the community after the available land had been

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[4] Villagers may also try to discipline their village chief through the organs of the "secret society" in the village. Secret societies are civic clubs that meet regularly in the (sacred) bush to discuss clan business, but details about such meetings are hardly available as members are bound by an oath of secrecy (e.g., Richards 1996). There are separate societies for females and males (*Poro*) and villagers may be initiated into the societies when they reach (young) adulthood. There is anecdotal evidence that sanctioning the chief for favoring one family or canonical clan over others may be negotiated in secret societies.

allocated to founding or ruling families. They are relegated to a dependent position in the community, and many have been in that position for several generations.

The divide between landowning families and strangers contributes to the feudal character of some of these communities (as described, for example, in Mokuwa et al. 2011). The share of strangers in local communities varies, but they represent the majority in some villages. In what follows, we use variation in the number (share) of non-stranger, native families as a practical measure to gauge the power of village elites: in villages with more natives, *ceteris paribus*, the chief is more likely to be challenged (but see Besley and Kudamatsu 2007 and Svolik 2008 for richer treatments of leader turnover in autocratic contexts).

4. Data and Experimental Design

4.1 The Experiment

We report the results of a field experiment conducted in 56 rural villages surrounding the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) in southeastern Sierra Leone. The GRNP is one of the largest and last remnants of the Upper Guinea forest in West Africa, and a global biodiversity hotspot. Local populations depend to a large extent on agriculture and forest-related goods and services. The GRNP is managed by a locally established NGO, the Gola Rain Forest National Park Program. In exchange for restrictions on hunting, logging, and mining rights within park boundaries, each community within one mile of the GRNP boundary received a once-off transfer of 2.4 million Leones (or USD 575) worth of "livelihood support" to be invested in either a communal construction or

agricultural project.[5] Although the GRNP had been working in the area since 1990, this is the first time they had given grants directly to communities in participatory processes. Some villages, consisting of less than 30 households, received a smaller grant, so we control for the size of the grant in our empirical work below. The GRNP Program agreed to vary the local governance regime associated with the management of this grant.

We implemented our study from 2010-2012. During the first visit to each village (summer 2010), a community meeting was held in which members of our research team and representatives of the GRNP Program explained the grant. Village members then selected in an open discussion and voting process a project they wanted to implement. Nearly all villages chose a construction project, such as a latrine, guesthouse, mosque or court bari (i.e. community meeting space). Importantly, this project selection village meeting occurred before we randomly determined who would steward the grant; thus, our analysis does *not* capture the impact of variations in how projects are selected because the selection mechanism and the management regime are orthogonal by design.[6]

Following the vote, the village was randomly assigned to one of two possible governance regimes for management and implementation. In our "committee" villages, we selected a three-member panel by drawing names of household heads out of a bag. While we allowed people to decline appointment as committee members, no one did. We

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[5] GDP PC in Sierra Leone in 2011 stood at an average of $374 (World Bank, 2013). This is likely much lower in rural areas (for example poverty headcount in Kenema district was 62% in 2011). The grant is valued at central market prices in Kenema. This implies that the total value of the project in each village is substantially higher as the NGO took care of the transportation costs, which constitute a significant amount in these remote areas.

[6] When selecting the project, we assume villagers would have viewed the selection process as nothing other than a typical participatory consultation by the NGO, assuming that the chief would manage whatever project they selected. It is possible that, had some villages known the chief would not be managing the project, they would have selected a different project. We feel this is unlikely, however, as the set of possible projects is small and there seemed to be widespread consensus in village meetings on what the village needed.

chose three committee members, rather than one member, to reduce variation in management ability across villages. We did not want the results of the experiment to be driven by the random selection of particularly weak managers in "committee" villages (e.g., "the village drunk" managing the project).

We realize random selection is an extreme form of purging elite involvement from project management, and do not necessarily propose this as a model for future development interventions (see Beath et al. (2013), and others, on experimental work involving the election of council members). Our design uses random selection of committee members because it was designed to limit, as much as possible, the ability of elites to capture the process. If villagers were asked to vote to choose project managers, they may have feel pressure to select the chief or his proxies (Uvin 2008). This would leave room for the chief to appropriate aid resources via his influence on these proxies. Hence, our experimental set-up intended to neutralize these effects and provide a cleaner test of the 'chief as despot' thesis. However, we recognize that this design precludes villagers from choosing the most intrinsically motivated or most capable citizen candidates.

Our control group consists of "chief" villages, wherein the chief, women's leader, and youth leader were responsible for project management. This 'co-opting' of village elites resembles the traditional way of handing over aid projects to villages, but we have chosen to delegate responsibility to three elite members, rather than to the chief alone, to ensure that the number of project managers would not be a confounding factor when identifying treatment effects. Not surprisingly, there are significant differences between elite managers and the average villager. Specifically, elite managers are on average older

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and less likely to originate from a stranger family (see Appendix Table A1 for details).

Controlling for these differences does not affect our qualitative results.[7] In our study

region, rural eastern Sierra Leone, approximately 30% of the respondents are illiterate,

and this percentage is not different for elite members and ordinary villagers (perhaps

reflecting that elite members, on average, are older).

In both "committee" and "chief" villages the management of project

implementation involved ordering supplies, receiving and storing supplies, organizing

construction efforts, and taking responsibility for maintenance of the project. Villagers,

including project managers, knew that researchers would return several more times to

deliver requested materials and to monitor how the project was performing. Although

performance was monitored, managers also knew that there would be no consequence to

them personally if the project failed. We made clear there was no sanctioning

mechanism. Based on previous interactions with the NGO, villagers would not have

expected much monitoring or accountability from the GRNP; this is perhaps born out by

the fact that many projects were not started several months after materials were delivered.

Baseline data were collected during the first visit to the village. Due to logistical

constraints we could only collect baseline data for a subsample of 39 communities (or

584 households).

Between September 2010 and February 2011, GRNP delivered the materials for

the community projects to the villages. After that, we visited the villages two more

times. We collected mid-line data during a visit in the Spring of 2011, and end-line data

during a visit in October-November 2012. For both surveys, we interviewed 780 people

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[7] It is interesting to observe that "strangers" are not missing from the elite group altogether. While there are no stranger chiefs, strangers are included in the samples of women leaders and youth leaders.

from all 56 villages. In addition, we sent engineers to all villages to audit the community project. Engineers entered the village "blind," without reviewing details of what type of project the community had selected, or to what treatment type the village was randomly assigned. They located whatever evidence of a project they could find, if any, and estimated the value of inputs into the project: materials used, hours of labor required, and so on. They also assessed the quality of construction and maintenance.

After this assessment was done, auditors pulled out a summary sheet explaining what project the village should have completed and what materials were delivered to the village. As a second check, they attempted to locate or account for all the materials on the list. They explicitly investigated if project materials had been used for side projects or personal projects, and if so, they asked to see those as well.

4.2 Outcome Variables and Identification Strategy

We are interested in the effect of the identity of project managers on two outcomes. First, we examine whether elites are more prone to divert project inputs than the average villager. Following Olken (2007), we construct a measure of diverted inputs by subtracting the engineer's estimate of the value of the constructed project from the total value of the grant. We also include measures of whether the auditor could find any materials in private side projects in other locations in the village.[8]

Second, we examine the relative effectiveness across the two groups, and ask whether elites or ordinary villagers are better able to implement and manage the project.

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[8] Another, more ambiguous, measure of input diversion may be the amount of cash requested by project managers, ostensibly to be used to pay for (skilled) labor. Project inputs came in the form of construction materials and tools delivered by GRNP Program, but managers could also ask for cash to pay for the use of labor. Anecdotal evidence suggests cash is particularly easy for managers to appropriate for themselves, but chiefs may also request different amounts of cash than villagers because they have different beliefs or expectations about the amount of skilled labor necessary to complete the project. As an extra test we examine whether chiefs ask for a larger share of the grant in the form of cash.

This dimension of success captures the elites' managerial ability (i.e. capacity) and their incentives to manage, as well as their ability to command complementary inputs from villagers (i.e. authority). We have several indicators of success: we used engineers' assessments to establish whether the village had been able to start the project at the time of the midline survey, whether the project had been completed during the end-line, and to obtain measures of construction quality and maintenance of the project. In addition, we recorded survey-based measures on the number of hours villagers reported working on the project and the overall satisfaction of villagers with the project ("Did you benefit from the project?" and "Did the project make you better off?"). As an auxiliary measure of success we explore whether attitudes towards forest conservation and the implementing NGO are affected by the management regime.

In addition to measuring average treatment effects, we also examine whether the performance of the two management regimes varies systematically across village types. Following Acemoglu et al. (2013), we test whether more powerful elites are more likely to be despots; grabbing a greater share of the project, allocating less effort to ensure successful completion of the project, and potentially sabotaging project management when the committee is responsible for implementation. While we lack detailed information on the number of landowning and tax-paying families, we do know the number of stranger families in each community (or the share of stranger families in the village—similar results eventuate when we base the analysis on this proxy). In what follows, we treat the number of non-stranger households as a proxy for the potential number of challengers, or as a proxy for the dilution or concentration of power. We thus ask whether the relative performance of the project managers varies with the strength of

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local elites. Because some non-strangers do not own land, we likely overestimate the number of real challengers and underestimate the power of the local elites. However, this "bias" is not correlated with our randomly assigned management regime, so should not affect the direction of the comparative statics results.

Our power proxy implies two potential confounds. First, the share of natives (strangers) may be correlated with social capital in the village. Perhaps people are more likely to be connected in kinship networks in villages with a high share of natives. Hence, villages with powerful elites (i.e. a smaller share of natives) could also have lower social capital, providing an alternative mechanism for any differences in project performance. Second, if natives have more human capital than strangers, then the expected "quality" of the committee is better as the share of non-natives in the population increases (because the odds of picking high-quality natives as committee members increase). If so, our power proxy potentially is also correlated with committee quality. To control for potential differences in social capital (at the village level) and human capital (at the committee level), we control for these variables in supplementary regressions.

To estimate average treatment effects, we regress the relevant outcome variable (Y_j) for village j on the binary treatment variable T_j (where $T=1$ indicates a "committee village"), while controlling for a vector of observable characteristics (X_j):

$$Y_j = \alpha + \beta_T T_j + \beta_X X_j + \varepsilon_j \tag{9}$$

where ε_j is an error term and β_T is the coefficient of interest.[9] In models based on household data (Y_{ij}) we cluster standard errors at the village level. Our control variables

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9 See appendix table A2a and A2b for (qualitatively similar) results when we estimate models without additional covariates.

are village size, distance to chiefdom headquarter town, and NGO performance (i.e. did the NGO deliver the materials as promised).

The "chief as despot" thesis suggests that elites grab more than ordinary villagers (i.e., $\beta_T < 0$ in models explaining diversion of inputs), and perhaps with elites performing more poorly in terms of overall management ($\beta_T > 0$ in models explaining project performance). To investigate heterogeneous treatment effects, we include an interaction term capturing the product of the treatment indicator and a variable capturing the power of the elites (P_j). In particular we estimate:

$$Y_j = \alpha + \beta_T T_j + \beta_P P_j + \beta_I T_j P_j + \beta_X X_j + \varepsilon_j . \tag{10}$$

This specification enables us to further scrutinize the "chief as despot" hypothesis because we can now explore whether more powerful elites are more corrupt and less likely to successfully implement the project. This implies testing whether $\beta_P < 0$ in models where the dependent variable Y_j captures cash requested or inputs diverted (and where P_j captures the number of non-stranger families), and testing whether $\beta_P > 0$ in models where Y_j represents a measure of success (note that the number of native families, P, is inversely related to power of the elites).

Further, equation (2) enables us to examine whether powerful chiefs seek to undermine the workings of the committee, as suggested by Uvin (2008). Assuming power facilitates sabotage by the elite, we expect $\beta_I > 0$ in models explaining committee performance. As the number of potential political challengers increases, this effect should weaken and committees would perform better.

4.3 Data

Table 1 summarizes our experimental data, for the "chief" and "committee" villages separately. Randomization of the experimental design was successful: "chief" and "committee" villages are balanced across observable characteristics collected during the baseline period, including the size of the grant, and the nature of the project selected (the great majority preferred construction projects over an agricultural intervention). Of course, we realize that for some variables the number of observations is small, so that the power of the associated t-test is low.

5. Field Experimental Results

5.1 Average Treatment Effects

Our main results on aid capture are summarized in Table 2a. All regression models contain a vector of controls, but to economize on space we only report the coefficients of interest, i.e. the coefficient associated with the chief treatment (β_T). For our three main proxies for input diversion, we find no evidence that more materials are missing in the chief groups: there is no difference in value of the project minus the value of the grant between chief and committee villages. Also, there is no evidence that project inputs showed up in irregular places (e.g., auditors did not find zinc sheets from the project on the roof of the chief's residence or in the possession of other village members). Conversely, the finding that input diversion does not increase in "committee" villages may reflect that mandates were unambiguously assigned, attenuating the types of potential common pool problems highlighted by Beath et al. (2013b).

In Table 2b we provide complementary results on project implementation. Chief villages are more likely to start with the project within a two-year period (column 1) and

are also more likely to finish it in time (column 2). These two variables suggest that chiefs are better managers of this type of community projects. This is supported by midline data (see Appendix Table A3), when auditors were more likely to find evidence of a project in chief villages than in committee villages ($p<0.05$).

Columns (3)-(4) provide further evidence that chiefs are better managers than ordinary villagers. Specifically, in spite of the small size of our sample (and considerable measurement error, undoubtedly), we find that projects in "chief" villages are better constructed and maintained, without people in the community reporting that they had to work more hours on the project (columns 5). Although individuals in the villages did not report that they were more or less satisfied with elites as managers (column 6) we do find that a larger share of the villagers believe they "benefitted from the project" and are "better off" as a result of the intervention (columns 7 and 8).

A final conclusion that may be gleaned from Table 2b is that it is difficult for NGOs to "buy" support for their work by implementing livelihood projects. The Gola Rainforest National Park Program runs this livelihood program explicitly to engender goodwill in the communities bordering the national park because they need people to cooperate with the conservation rules that govern the park. If attitudes towards the NGO were a function of the success of the project implementation, then (in light of the difference in performance between chief and committee villages) we would expect different levels of satisfaction across treatments. Instead, we cannot reject that satisfaction is the same across treatments. Columns (9) and (10) suggest the governance modality is negatively (but not significantly) related to the attitudes of villagers towards either the implementing NGO or overarching conservation program. We have probed the

robustness of this insight by using alternative proxies for the attitudes of villagers in forest edge communities, and find similar results (see Appendix Table A4).

One question that immediately arises is whether the chief and committee villages follow a different path to stewarding their projects. We find, on average, elite managers asked for more cash than committees of villagers. In our sample, managers in 23% of chief villages requested cash versus 8% of the committee villages, but this is only statistically significant at the $p < 0.11$ level. In addition, elite managers requested on average USD 18 for skilled labor, but committees requested only USD 3.44 (p=0.06). In percentage terms, elites ask on average 4% of project funds in the form of cash, while committees take less than 1% (p=0.04). This difference in cash requests amounts to nearly USD 15, which is a sizable amount of cash in this part of rural Sierra Leone, but modest in light of the value of the total grant, close to 5%.[10]

5.2 Does the Chief's Power Matter?

We do not "experimentally vary" chief power across villages, so our ability to test hypotheses involving the (conditioning) effect of power on performance is limited. Moreover, as mentioned, we measure power with considerable noise. With these important qualifications in mind, we now probe the impact of chief power in Tables 3a and 3b.

We obtain mixed evidence for the hypothesis that chief power is correlated with input diversion. According to column (1) in Table 3a, on average committees divert less

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[10] In the end-line survey, we asked villagers about their opinion regarding the diversion of project resources by the chief. When asked what percentage of project resources chiefs are allowed to take for himself, on average subjects said 9.3 percent. Seventy-one percent of villagers also indicated that the chief should take some project resources for himself. If villagers perceive diversion as compensation for a valuable service, then perhaps it represents a fee, rather than theft. As mentioned above, differences in cash requests may also reflect diverging expectations with respect to labor requirements. For these reasons we prefer to use the more direct measurements of input diversion – the results on cash requests are reported in Appendix Table A2.

money than elites. While the extent of political competition does not affect diversion by the elite, it is correlated with "missing inputs" in committee villages. In committee villages with more powerful chiefs, fewer inputs are missing. As the number of chief families in the village increases, it is also true that the probability that a member of the committee is connected to one of the chiefly families increases, which would explain this pattern. This implies that committees of average villagers get stronger (i.e. more prone to the diversion of resources from the project) as the concentration of power in the village gets more diffuse, whereas chiefs may get weaker (i.e. less prone to the diversion of resources). We also find that, in chief villages, the presence of side projects is negatively associated with the power of the chief (column 2). This is not consistent with the chief as a despot thesis (but could, potentially, be consistent with the perspective that weak chiefs have to buy support from other villagers by sharing project inputs). However, as evident from column (3), this effect is not very strong or robust.

Our results in Table 3b are consistent with the interpretation that committee performance is conditional on the power of the chief. Specifically, committees perform *worse* on several key measures of success ("Has the project started?"; "Was it well constructed and maintained?"; "Are you satisfied with the project?") if the chief is more powerful in the village. This is consistent with several hypotheses, including a "chief as saboteur" hypothesis. In this case, chiefs may actively seek to signal to our NGO that they should work through village elites the next time they dispense aid. The committee structure threatens the chief's future power or role as broker and liaison with the outside world, and more powerful chiefs are better able to undermine the committee's efforts.

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Since the proxy for elite power may also be correlated with social capital and human capital we control for these variables. Social capital is measured as the average score on a series of World Value Survey trust questions (measuring trust in family members, fellow villagers, and "strangers"). Human capital is proxied by the variables included in Table A1. We do not have education data, but formal education is minimal for all adult respondents. Details of the regression results are provided in Appendix Tables A5a and A5b. They are fully consistent with the findings discussed above.[11]

While we did not search for (direct) evidence on sabotage activities undertaken by the chief, it is possible that chiefs attempt to undermine the performance (and, hence, legitimacy) of the committee introduced in "their" village. This may be achieved, for example, by obstructing committee efforts to mobilize labor to implement the project (column 5). However, we hasten to add that our interpretation of these data is necessarily speculative, and should be tested more rigorously in future empirical work.

6. Conclusions and discussion

A growing literature in economics and political science points to weak governance as a major cause of (African) under-development, and argues that poor management is not restricted to "predatory" or incapable states. At the local level, leaders are often perceived to be either incapable or corrupt. One hypothesis explaining such patterns is that colonial systems of indirect rule severed ties of accountability between chiefs and villagers. The so-called "chief as despot" thesis has gained momentum, and has spurred a

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[11] In addition, possible correlations between village size and our measure of chief power may bias our results. For example, if in larger villages, the total grant value is smaller on a per capita basis, and elites may be less inclined to put effort in the project. When we control for both village size and its interaction with elite power, results do not change.

search for alternative governance modalities at the local level. The surge in funding for participatory development interventions that bypass both central and decentralized levels of government is a prominent manifestation of this ambition.

Rigorous statistical evidence on the management performance of local leadership in Africa is scarce, however. In what has been done, a mixed picture emerges. For example, while Acemoglu et al. (2013) find some support for the "chief as despot" thesis by considering public good provision at the level of paramount chiefs in Sierra Leone, a recent study by Humphreys et al. (2013) does not support the view of widespread diversion of aid money at the local level in the DRC.

While our simple theoretical model proposes that more powerful chiefs will be more corrupt by diverting more resources from the public good to their personal benefit, will under-invest in management of the project, and will seek to undermine the performance of managing committees, our empirical findings provide a more nuanced and mixed picture of the quality of local management in Africa. Our field experiment finds little evidence that local elites managing an aid project divert more resources than the average villager, or that more powerful chiefs divert more than less powerful ones. Moreover, the village elites are able to manage a development project better than a committee of randomly selected villagers (which is not surprising and should not be misconstrued as an argument in favor of customary leadership over democratically-elected councils, as our committees were not elected)[12]. Projects managed by village

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[12] As aforementioned, electing council members may enable villagers to select the "best candidates" from their midst, but also opens the door to elite capture if the elite is able to obtain sufficient support for its proxies.

elites are also more likely to start and be completed on time, are better constructed and maintained, and provide more (perceived) benefits for the villagers.[13]

Three candidate explanations for differences in performance immediately leap to mind. Chiefs may (1) have superior abilities to implement and oversee a project (due to learning by doing, or because chiefs are selected based on characteristics correlated with management ability); (2) chiefs may be able to draw on complementary village resources by virtue of their formal authority; or (3) chiefs may have stronger (dynamic) incentives to successfully complete the project because they expect future benefits from successful project completion. We lack the data to uncover which mechanism explains why the chief tends to outperform the committee, but we do observe that chiefs can more effectively engage with the NGO (arguably a measure of ability or quality). According to our data, chief villages on average received their first batch of materials 19 days before committee villages ($p=0.002$), and their last batch 20 days before committee villages ($p=0.001$). Future research should further probe the mechanism explaining differences in performance between chiefs and committees.

Our theoretical model suggests a fourth reason to explain the difference in performance between chiefs and committees: sabotage by the chief in case the committee is responsible for project management. Vested interests associated with pre-existing institutions (traditional agrarian hierarchies) may view the newly introduced management regime as a threat to their authority and position, and seek to undermine the legitimacy of

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[13] While villages selected projects before they knew who would manage the project, most villagers presumably believed the chief would implement the project. It is possible that committees have an advantage in managing different types of projects, in which case the discriminating alignment theory predicts that fully informed villages would have selected a different project had they known the identity of the project manager. If so, we underestimate the potential of committees to successfully manage certain projects.

such institutional innovations by sabotage. We hypothesize that more powerful chiefs are better able to do this, and (perhaps covertly) obstruct the functioning of the committee. We obtain some non-experimental data that are consonant with this hypothesis. We document that, across a range of relevant performance measures, committees score worse when the chief is more powerful when we use a measure of local political competition as a proxy for chief power.

Overall, our research implies a warning to policy makers and development practitioners seeking approaches to circumvent local elites or tie their hands to curtail rent capture. Consistent with recent evidence by Casey et al (2012) and Humphreys et al (2013), we find that creating viable parallel institutions for project implementation is challenging. It is an open question whether equity gains of such approaches are dominated by efficiency losses, and it may be worthwhile to instead explore strategies that involve providing incentives to elites to facilitate project implementation. This may create a dilemma between short-term efficiency in project implementation versus long-term implications of imbalanced power relationships. Working via elites may cement their position of power within existing patron-client networks. A challenge for researchers interested in the management of development resources is to probe how communities can move from dependence on effective local elites to systems where projects are completed with high participation and performance.

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Table 1. Summary of Data per Governance Regime

Characteristic	Chief (SD) n=30	Committee (SD) n=26	Difference (p-value)	Obs
Household level				
Percent male	0.69	0.7	-0.01	778
	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.46)	
Average age	43.09	42.06	1.03	779
	(15.80)	(14.80)	(0.46)	
Farm size (acres)	2.851	2.68	0.17	733
	(2.76)	(1.56)	(0.33)	
Percent satisfied with the NGO at baseline	0.89	0.82	0.07	541
	(0.31)	(0.39)	(0.65)	
Community level				
Number of households	36.35	40.1	-3.75	56
	(32.90)	(33.00)	(0.67)	
Distance to motorable road	12.77	15.66	2.891	55
	(7.98)	(5.92)	(0.14)	
Construction project	0.80	0.92	0.12	56
	(0.41)	(0.27)	(0.20)	
Grant value (in 1000 leones)	1782	1894	-112	56
	(566)	(566)	(0.47)	
Number of "Chief Families"	30.65	32.54	-1.89	56
	(31.13)	(30.75)	(0.82)	
Percentage "strangers" in community	0.17	0.24	-0.07	56
	(0.38)	(0.43)	(0.61)	

Table 2a. ATE Project Outcomes, Aid diversion

	(1) Grant value of project minus audit value	(2) Presence of side projects	(3) Presence of project materials at other locations
	OLS	OLS	OLS
Committee	-81.19	-0.066	0.002
	(107.4)	(0.079)	(0.113)
Constant	384.2	0.241	-0.204
	(256.7)	(0.190)	(0.223)
Obs.	56	52	53
Adj. R^2	0.085	-0.041	-0.010

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Regression includes village size (normalized), distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD) (except for column (1)) and NGO performance.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 2b. ATE Project Outcomes, Implementation

	(1) Project started endline	(2) Project mostly complete endline	(3) How well constructed is the project?	(4) How well maintained is the project?	(5) Hours reported worked on the project (ln)	(6) Are you satisfied with the management of the project?	(7) Did you benefit from the project?	(8) Are you better off?	(9) Are you satisfied with the GFP?	(10) Do you support conserving GRNP?
	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
Comm	-0.301**	-0.276*	-0.940*	-1.062**	-0.0741	-0.0993	-0.452***	-0.366**	-0.126	-0.136
	(0.135)	(0.141)	(0.489)	(0.500)	(0.157)	(0.130)	(0.167)	(0.150)	(0.149)	(0.118)
Constant	1.153***	0.521*	3.817***	3.328***	1.252***	4.292***	3.846***	2.857***	3.822***	4.331***
	(0.250)	(0.295)	(0.960)	(0.945)	(0.183)	(0.122)	(0.288)	(0.276)	(0.275)	(0.223)
Obs.	56	56	56	56	801	830	867	875	882	882
Adj. R^2	0.157	-0.020	0.070	0.085	0.121	0.013	0.051	0.027	0.095	0.055

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at village level for Column (5)-(10). Regression includes village size (normalised), distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD) and NGO performance. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3a. Heterogeneity Chief Power, Aid diversion

	(1) Grant value of project minus audit value OLS	(2) Presence of side projects Probit	(3) Presence of project materials at other locations Probit
Committee	-266.2** (117.8)	0.115 (0.981)	-0.060 (0.533)
Number of chief families in village	6.898 (6.597)	0.333** (0.136)	-0.017 (0.0320)
Chief families * Committee	5.604* (3.057)	-0.0273 (0.0390)	0.002 (0.012)
Constant	99.12 (415.5)	-10.82** (5.387)	-2.104 (1.362)
Obs.	56	52	53
Adj. R^2	0.124		

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Regression includes village size, distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD) (except for column (1)) and NGO performance. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3b. Heterogeneity Chief Power, Implementation

	(1) Project started end-line	(2) Project mostly complete end-line	(3) How well constructed is the project?	(4) How well maintained is the project?	(5) Hours reported worked on the project (ln)	(6) Satisfied with project management?	(7) Did you benefit from the project?	(8) Are you better off?	(9) Are you satisfied with the GFP?	(10) Do you support conserving GRNP?
	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
Committee	-0.668***	-0.303	-2.105***	-2.446***	-0.492***	-0.338*	-0.495*	-0.416*	0.210	0.00528
	(0.148)	(0.195)	(0.548)	(0.520)	(0.166)	(0.199)	(0.250)	(0.223)	(0.223)	(0.167)
Number of chief families in village	0.010	-0.000	0.0232	0.0253	0.0123	0.00146	0.0209**	0.00952	0.0133	0.0162**
	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.0311)	(0.0330)	(0.00979)	(0.00662)	(0.0101)	(0.00848)	(0.00974)	(0.00767)
Chief families * Committee	0.011***	0.001	0.0344***	0.0408***	0.0113**	0.00605**	0.00209	0.00172	-0.00834	-0.00307
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.0120)	(0.0125)	(0.00524)	(0.00297)	(0.00486)	(0.00390)	(0.00590)	(0.00456)
Constant	0.727*	0.519	2.709*	2.086	0.710	4.190***	3.117***	2.522***	3.449***	3.814***
	(0.404)	(0.499)	(1.534)	(1.450)	(0.427)	(0.235)	(0.421)	(0.331)	(0.466)	(0.379)
Obs.	56	56	56	56	801	830	867	875	882	882
Adj. R^2	0.292	-0.062	0.155	0.206	0.166	0.026	0.067	0.028	0.106	0.064

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at village level for Column (5)-(10). Regression includes village size, distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD) and NGO performance. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

APPENDIX (Not for publication)

Table A1. Chief Group versus Committee

Characteristic	Chief (SD) n=30	Committee (SD) n=26	Difference (p-value)	Obs
Male	0.72	0.75	-0.030	158
	(0.45)	(0.44)	(0.66)	
Age	47.76	41.50	6.26	159
	(16.09)	(14.05)	(0.01)	
Farm size (acres)	32.44	27.72	4.71	150
	(51.96)	(14.93)	(0.46)	
Stranger	0.10	0.20	-0.10	159
	(0.30)	(0.40)	(0.07)	

Table A2a. ATE Project Outcomes, Cash requested without controls

	(1) Percent of grant requested as cash	(2) Audit value of project minus grant value	(3) Presence of side projects	(4) Presence of project materials at other locations
Committee	-2.744*	-62.59	-0.490	0.143
	(1.585)	(104.2)	(0.562)	(0.387)
Constant	4.506***	-59.92	-1.242***	-0.817***
	(1.080)	(74.40)	(0.320)	(0.266)
Obs.	56	56	52	53
Adj. R^2		-0.012		

Robust standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A2b. ATE Project Outcomes, Implementation without controls

	(1) Project started endline	(2) Project mostly complete endline	(3) How well constructed is the project?	(4) How well maintained is the project?	(5) Hours reported worked on the project (ln)	(6) Are you satisfied with project management?	(7) Did you benefit from the project?	(8) Are you better off?	(9) Are you satisfied with the GFP?	(10) Do you support conserving GRNP?
Com-Mittee	-0.631*	-0.586*	-0.836*	-0.715	0.0976	-0.107	-0.363**	-0.309**	-0.337*	-0.240*
	(0.356)	(0.348)	(0.446)	(0.472)	(0.170)	(0.0910)	(0.159)	(0.136)	(0.181)	(0.132)
Cons.	0.728***	0.0837	2.567***	2.600***	1.650***	4.042***	3.748***	3.204***	3.620***	4.090***
	(0.255)	(0.231)	(0.295)	(0.294)	(0.0861)	(0.0582)	(0.0954)	(0.0771)	(0.104)	(0.0750)
Obs.	56	56	56	56	801	830	867	875	882	882
Adj. R^2			0.044	0.024	0.001	0.004	0.027	0.016	0.019	0.014

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at village level for Column (5)-(10).* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A3. ATE Project Outcomes, Implementation Midline

	(1) Project started midline
Committee	-2.028***
	(0.762)
Constant	0.439
	(1.019)
Obs.	54
Adj. R^2	

Robust standard errors in parentheses, Regression includes village size, distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD) and NGO performance.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A4. ATE Project Outcomes, Implementation, Alternative Satisfaction Proxies

	(1) 1.2.2. Have you benefitted from GFP?	(2) 1.2.4. Are people who do illegal activities reported?	(3) 1.2.5. Have you changed the way you farm?	(4) 1.2.6. Is the forest healthier and stronger?	(5) 1.4.1 Are you satisfied with organization by GFP?	(6) 1.4.2 Are you satisfies with materials?	(7) 1.4.3 Do you use and benefit??	(8) 1.4.4 Are you better off?
Committee	-0.282*	0.0929	-0.0161	0.00103	-0.311***	-0.330**	-0.458***	-0.361**
	(0.151)	(0.118)	(0.0495)	(0.0630)	(0.0927)	(0.126)	(0.167)	(0.149)
Constant	3.189***	3.930***	4.127***	4.647***	3.834***	3.716***	3.845***	2.862***
	(0.338)	(0.272)	(0.104)	(0.138)	(0.180)	(0.253)	(0.288)	(0.276)
Obs.	880	780	876	837	878	863	868	875
Adj. R^2	0.087	0.028	-0.002	0.020	0.032	0.027	0.052	0.026

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at village level, Regression includes village size, distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD) and NGO performance.* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A5a. ATE Project Outcomes

	(1) Percent of grant requested as cash	(2) Audit value of project minus grant value	(3) Presence of side projects	(4) Presence of project materials at other locations
Committee	-3.250**	-82.861	-0.091	0.042
	(1.529)	(117.502)	(0.103)	(0.131)
Constant	3.497	-1651.303	-1.339	0.687
	(3.252)	(1413.880)	(1.173)	(1.693)
Obs.	56	55	51	52
Adj. R^2		0.111	-0.103	-0.085

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Regression includes village size (normalized), distance to Chiefdom headquarter town, project value (USD, except for column (1)), NGO performance, elite and committee characteristics (age, gender, stranger, income) and social capital
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A5b. ATE Project Outcomes

	(1) Project started endline	(2) Project mostly complete endline	(3) How well constructed is the project?	(4) How well maintained is the project?	(5) Hours reported worked on the project (ln)	(6) Are you satisfied with project management?	(7) Did you benefit from the project?	(8) Are you better off?	(9) Are you satisfied with the GFP?	(10) Do you support conserving GRNP?
Committee	-0.322**	-0.356**	-0.969*	-1.093*	-0.088	-0.092	-0.482***	-0.449***	-0.179	-0.145
	(0.141)	(0.154)	(0.535)	(0.562)	(0.145)	(0.168)	(0.169)	(0.149)	(0.170)	(0.119)
Constant	-0.018	-2.311	0.981	-0.198	-0.313	4.372***	-1.389	-0.204	0.758	5.365***
	(1.888)	(2.451)	(7.376)	(7.351)	(1.992)	(1.315)	(2.293)	(1.961)	(2.631)	(1.817)
Obs.	55	55	55	55	787	816	854	861	868	868
Adj. R^2	0.146	-0.028	-0.003	0.023	0.147	0.013	0.073	0.041	0.102	0.056

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at village level for Column (5)-(10). Regression includes village size (normalized), distance to Chiefdom headquarter town and project value (USD), NGO performance, elite and committee characteristics (age, gender, stranger, income) and social capital. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$