

Does Information Lead to More Active Citizenship?

Evidence from an Education Information Intervention in Rural Kenya

Evan S. Lieberman
Princeton

Daniel N. Posner
MIT

Lily L. Tsai
MIT

The World Bank
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Background and Motivation

- How to improve the well-being of the world's poorest citizens?
- Old answer: Do things for them (top down)
 - Build schools and roads, staff clinics, train bureaucrats
- New answer: Motivate them to apply pressure on their own governments for improved service delivery (bottom up)
 - How? By providing information about govt performance
 - Approach supported by rich theoretical tradition rooted in P-A framework
 - Has become embedded in a host of recent development programs
 - Newspaper and radio campaigns
 - Citizen report cards (health, leakage of funds, performance of MP, etc)
- By and large, however, the results have been disappointing
- A major task of this paper is to figure out why

The Uwezo Initiative

- Uwezo means “capability” in Kiswahili
- Large-scale information-based intervention designed to improve education outcomes by providing parents with information about children’s learning
 - Goal is to improve children’s learning and generate active citizenry that will also have impact in other spheres (health, water, etc)
- Covers 3 countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda
- Intervention is repeated annually over 5 yrs (we study the 2nd round in 2011)
- Random sampling of districts, villages, and households
 - 124 districts (of 158)
 - 30 villages per district
 - 20 households per village
- 72,106 households and 134,243 children treated in 2011

The Uwezo Initiative (cont'd)

- Three components
 - Assessment
 - Tests of basic literacy (English and Kiswahili) and numeracy
 - Administered to children aged 6-16
 - Results reported immediately to parents
 - Instructional materials
 - Wall calendar with statements about value of education
 - Poster with checklist of strategies parents might take to improve their children's learning
 - Stories in English and Kiswahili to be read by children
 - “Citizen's flyer” with recommendations about how to get involved in local and national efforts to improve education outcomes
 - Dissemination campaign
 - Publicize results of assessment via press conferences, provincial- and district-level meetings, newspaper stories, radio shows, SMS campaigns

Elimu Bora: Jukumu la Mzazi

①



Je, wewe humfunza mwanao maneno mapya na jinsi ya kuyatamka? ☐ Ndio ☐ La

②



Je, wewe humsimulia mwanao hadithi na baadaye kumwuliza maswali? ☐ Ndio ☐ La

③



Je, mwanao hukuona ukisoma vitabu au magazeti? ☐ Ndio ☐ La

④



Je, wewe humwuliza mwanao akusomee akiwa nyumbani? ☐ Ndio ☐ La

⑤



Je, wewe hujadiliana na mwanao kuhusu maandishi kwenye bidhaa mbalimbali? ☐ Ndio ☐ La

⑥



Je, wewe humhimiza mwanao kuandika? ☐ Ndio ☐ La

Timiza Jukumu Lako!

Better Education: The Parents' Responsibility

Do you teach your child new words and how to pronounce them?

Do you tell your child stories and ask questions later?

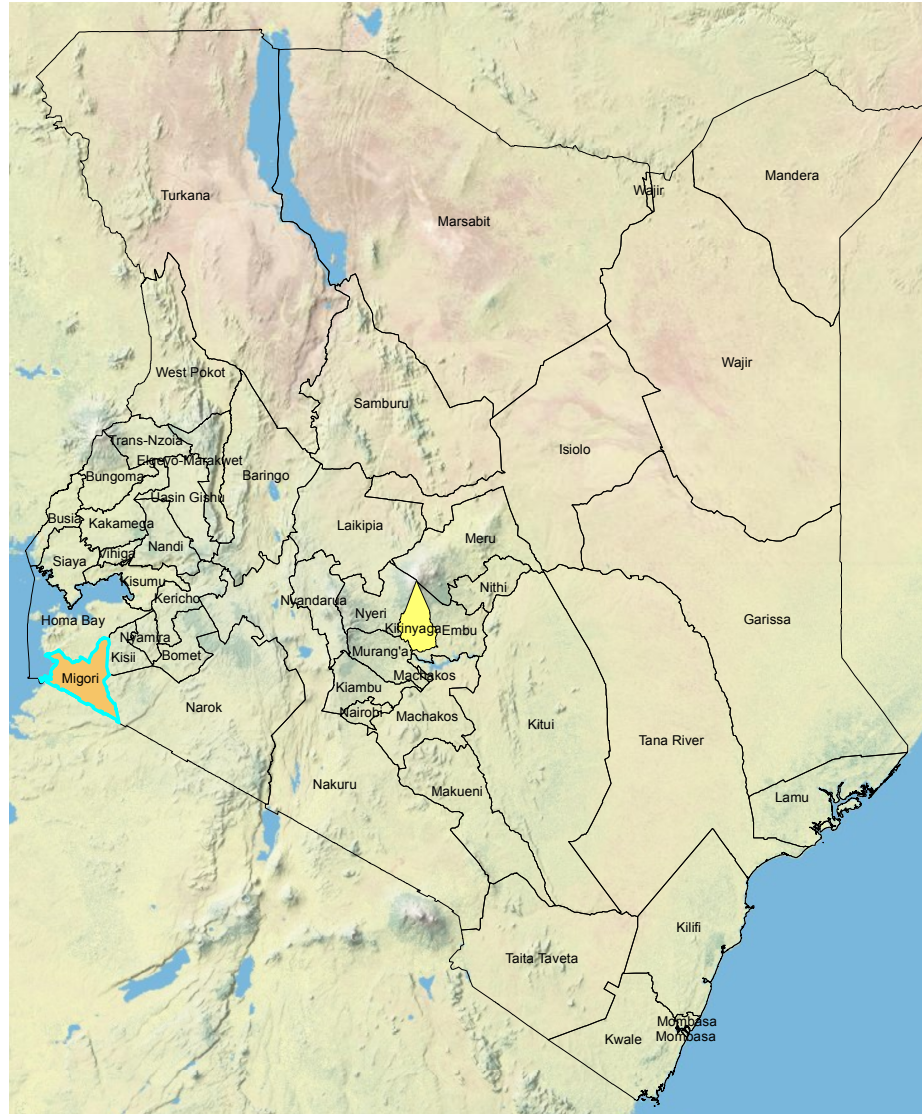
Does your child see you read books and newspapers?

Do you encourage your child to write?

Etc.

Post-Treatment, Matched Village Design

- Two districts: Kirinyaga and Rongo



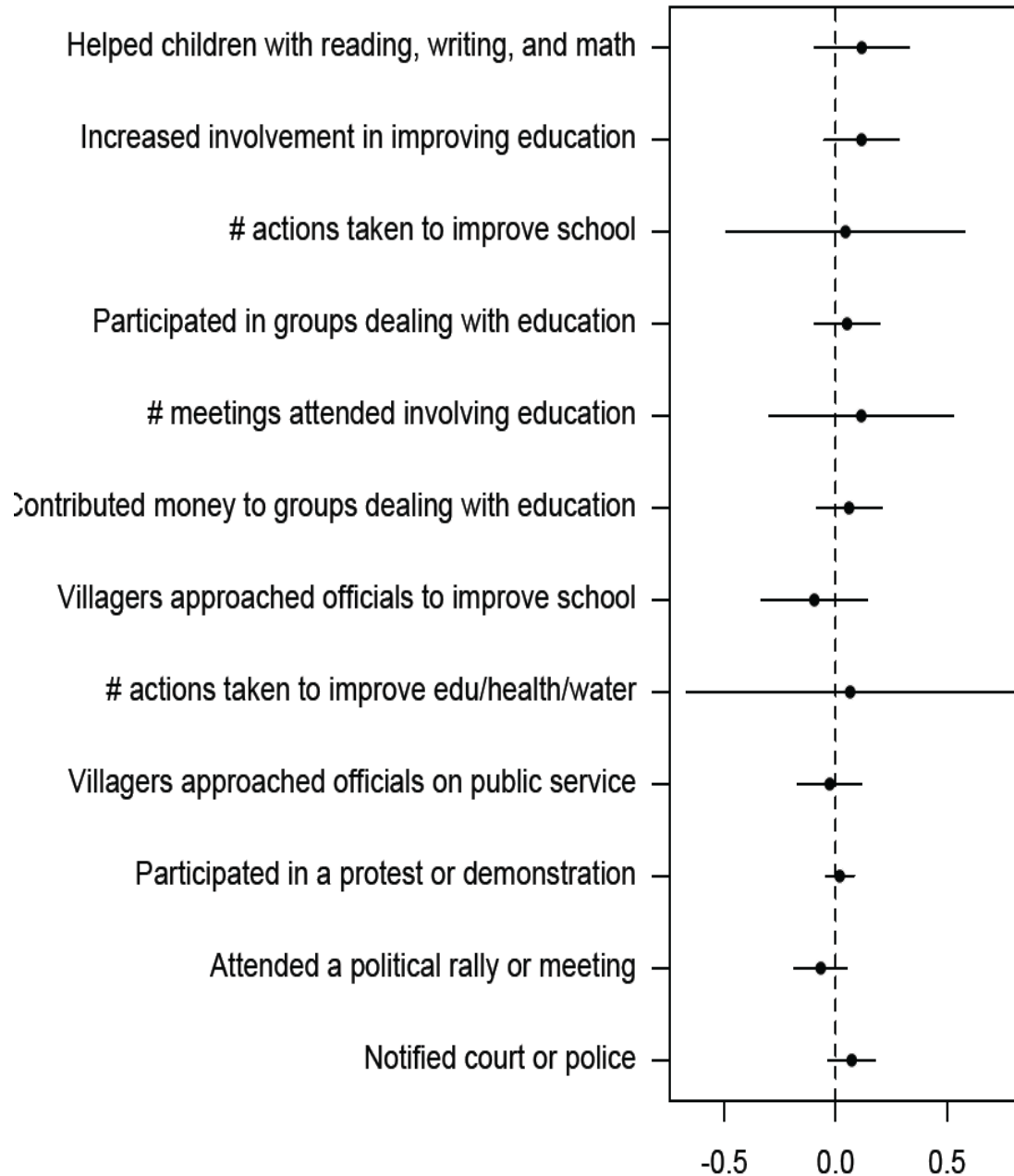
Post-Treatment, Matched Village Design

- Two districts: Kirinyaga and Rongo
- Six non-contiguous villages in each district from among the 30 that had received assessments (“treated villages”)
- Six villages in each district, each matched to a treated village on basis of population size, educational attainment, access to radio and mobile phone (“control villages”)
- Within villages, we sampled...
 - In treated villages: all assessed households (approx 12)
 - In control villages: 15 randomly selected households w school-aged children
 - [also, to test for spillover effects, 15 un-assessed households in treated villages]
- Total sample of 146 treated and 200 control households

Outcomes Measured via Household Survey

- Interventions at home to help one's own children
 - Do you help your child with reading, writing, math?
- General involvement in efforts to improve one's children's learning
 - How involved are you in trying to improve the quality of your children's education?
 - Has this level of involvement changed during the past 3 months?
- Interventions at school
 - Have you discussed your child's performance with his/her teacher?
 - Have you attended parent-teacher meetings?
 - Have you provided teaching materials to school?
 - Have you helped with school maintenance?
- Civic participation and citizen action more generally
 - Have you participated in community groups/associations?
 - Have you approached village officials/political leaders re service delivery?
 - Have you participated in protests, political rallies, demonstrations?

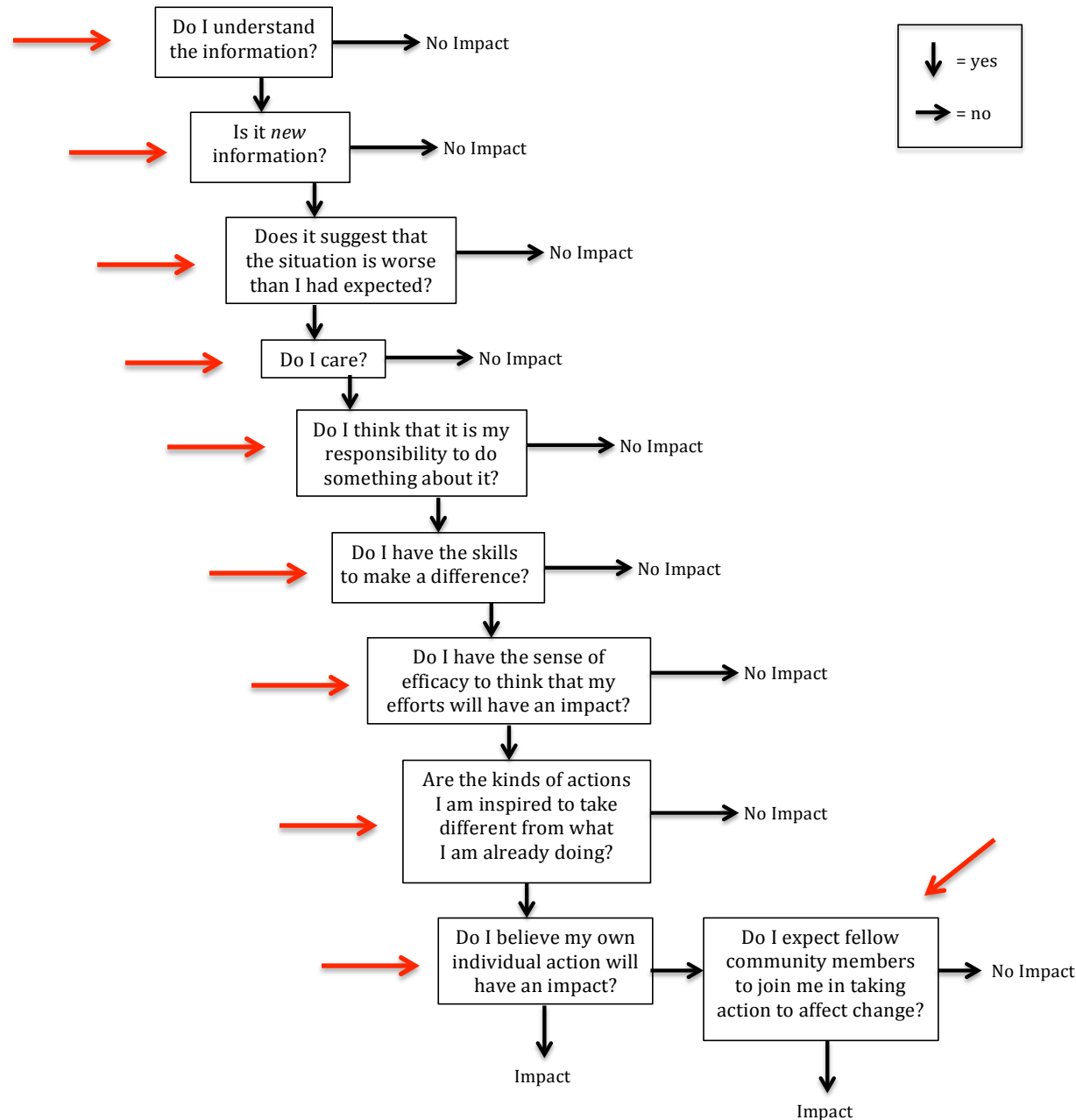
No Treatment Effect



Why No Treatment Effect?

- We are underpowered
- Insufficient time had passed (just 3 months) between assessment and our household survey
- Dissemination campaign had not yet begun
- Too few assessed households (just 12, on avg) in treated villages to achieve critical mass necessary for collective action
- Absence of key conditions necessary for information provision to lead to citizen activism
 - We summarize these conditions in what we call the “information-citizen action causal chain”

The Information-Citizen Action Causal Chain



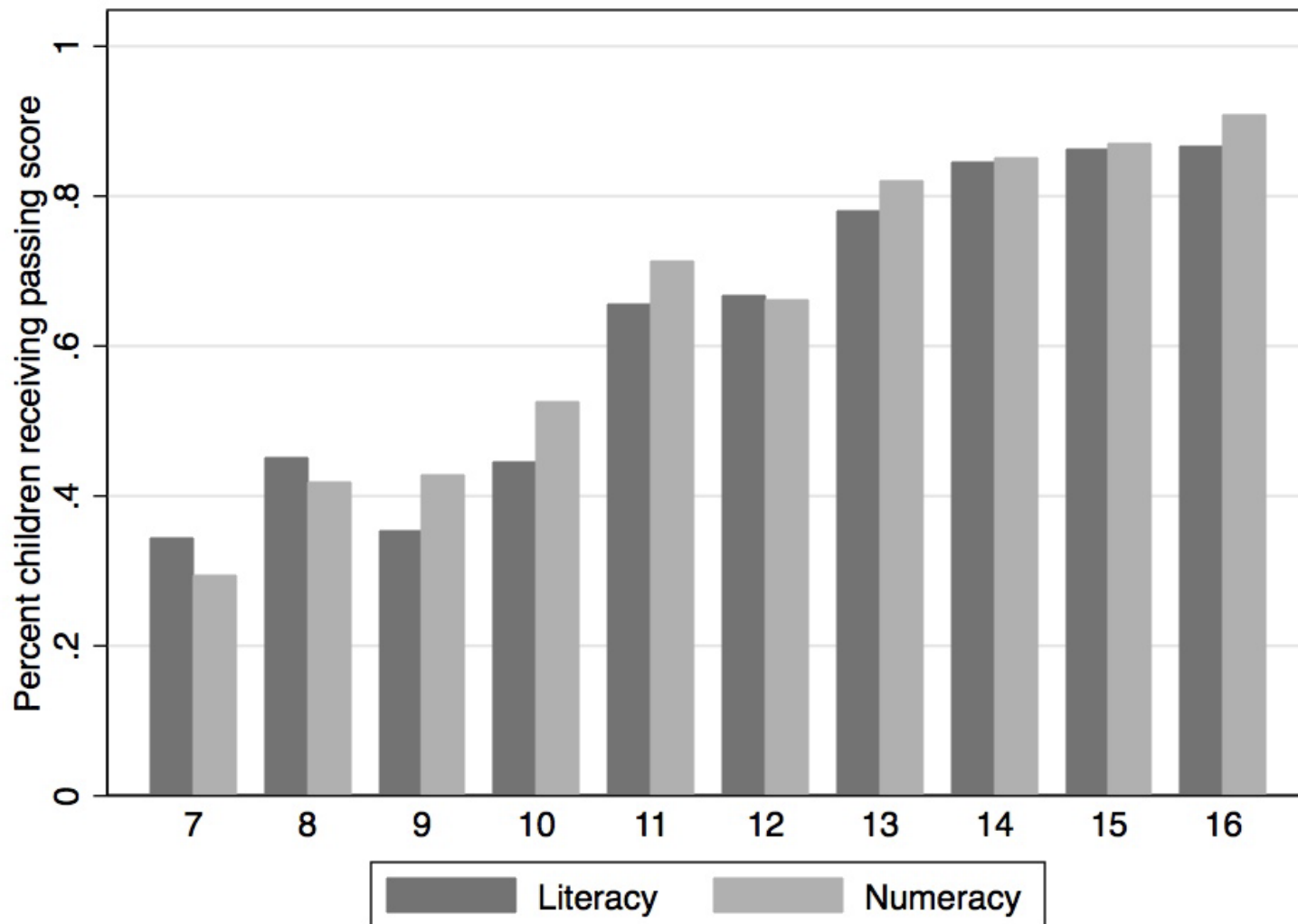
Did Parents Understand the Information?

- We have no direct measure of parents' understanding of the information provided to them
- About 25 percent of parents in our sample were illiterate and had completed, on average, only primary school
- Nonetheless, we believe, based on focus groups work, that parents understood the information they received about their children's assessment results and the ideas for action

Was the Information New?

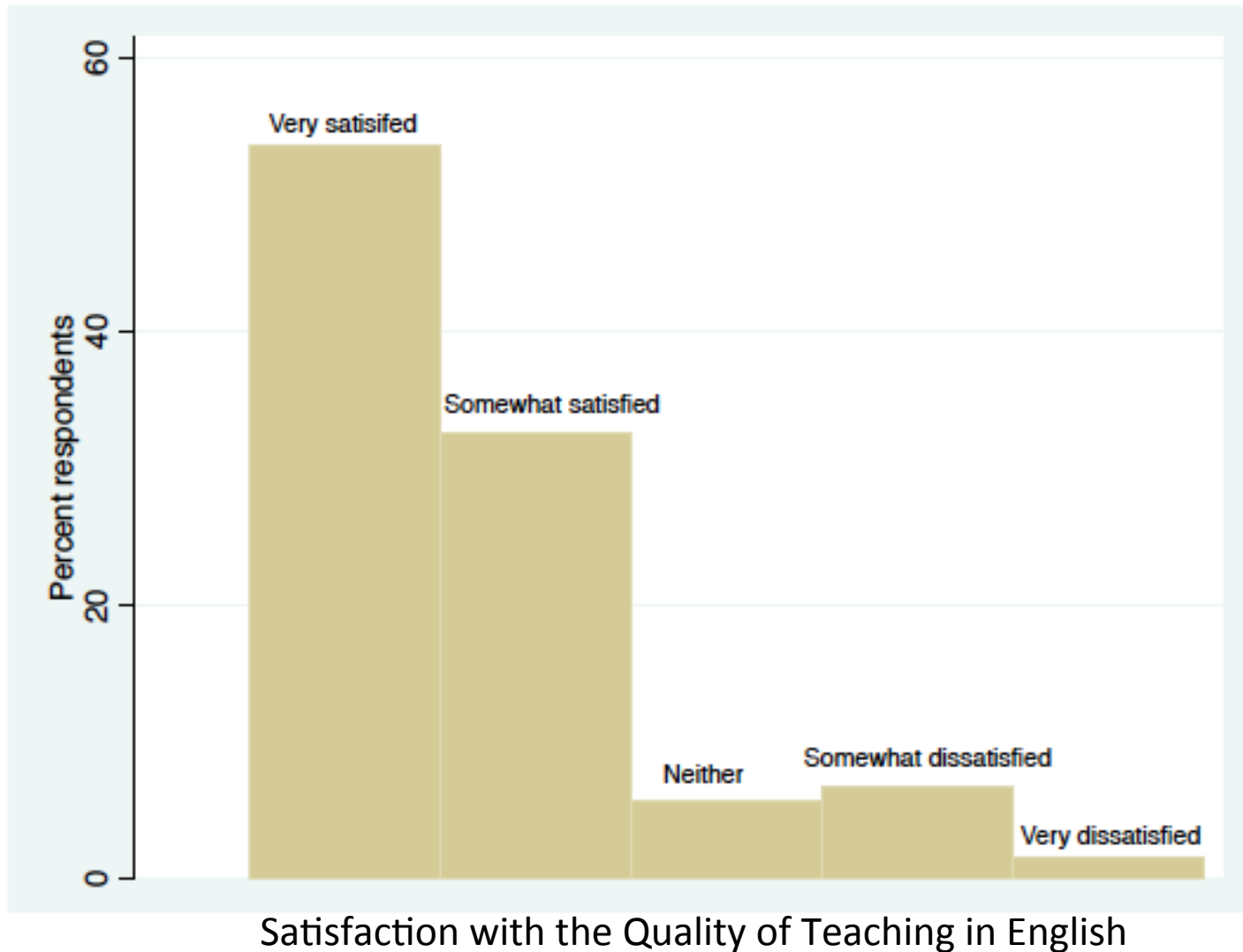
- Among those who could remember the results that had been reported to them at the time of the assessment, fully 60% reported that their child's test scores were about the same as they expected them to be
- Parents also were well informed about their children's schools' KCPE scores
 - >80% of parents said they had heard of the KCPE
 - >70% reported that they knew the KCPE rank quartile of their child's school

Was it Bad News?



Percent of Children Receiving Passing Scores
on Uwezo Assessments, by Age

Was it Bad News? (cont'd)



Do Parents Care?

- In a supplementary survey in one of our two research districts we asked 261 parents what they would do if they were given 1000 Ksh to spend on improving the local health clinic, school or village well.
- Parents did allocate, on average, more money to education, but only slightly so:
 - 380 KSh for education
 - 343 KSh for health
 - 272 KSh for water improvement
- Also, more parents (43%) ranked education first
- However, no significant correlation between allocating the most money to education and willingness to engage in education-supporting activities such as donating books to school, help with school maintenance or provide food and water to the school.

Do Parents Think It Is Their Responsibility?

- Only 6% of parents thought parents were responsible for making sure that teachers come to school and teach the children; 83% said it was the headmaster's responsibility
- In the supplementary survey, only 16% of parents thought that parents working on their own should take responsibility for improving the schools; 49% said that teachers or principals should take responsibility
- In the 2008 Afrobarometer survey in Kenya, respondents were asked who they thought had primary responsibility for the country's schools.
 - 85% said the central or local government
 - Just 11% said members of the community

Do Parents Have the Skills to Make a Difference?

- While 58 percent said they would consider taking actions to address problems with their children's school, 72 percent said they would not know (or would not know how to figure out) what specific actions to take
- Only 17 percent have had experience contacting an official
- Only 20 percent have written a letter as part of a community group

Do Parents Have the Sense of Efficacy to Think Their Actions Will Have an Impact?

- Many parents feared that complaining about corruption at the village school would result in punishment or retribution
 - 42% thought punishment was very likely
 - Another 24% thought punishment was somewhat likely
- We also infer that many parents may have felt that trying to improve education was pointless because the government is too corrupt to implement necessary reforms. When asked how much money people would actually receive if the government gave out 10,000 KSh in relief payments
 - 86% said people would receive half or less of the money
 - On average, people thought that only 2678 Ksh would make it into the people's hands (i.e., that almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the money would be siphoned off!)

- These findings of low efficacy are mirrored in the results of the 2008 Kenyan Afrobarometer:
- When there are problems with how local government is run in your community, how much can an ordinary person do to improve the situation?
 - 72% said “nothing” or “only a small amount”
- How easy or difficult is it for an ordinary person to have his voice heard between elections?
 - 78% said “very difficult” or “somewhat difficult”
- How likely do you think it is that people can be punished by government officials if they make complaints about poor quality services or misuse of funds?
 - 35% said “somewhat likely” or “very likely”

Are Parents Already Doing These Things?

- 74 percent report that they either always or sometimes help their children with their schoolwork; 36 percent report that they *always* help their children with their schoolwork
- 88 percent report engaging in at least one of our list of nine school-related activities; on avg, people report engaging in almost three
- 41 percent report being members of community groups dedicated to education issues; about one-third report contributing money to such groups
- 43 percent report having approached village officials or other political leaders to ask about improving schools in the past 3 months

Do Parents Expect Others to Join Efforts?

- We find some (weak) evidence of stronger treatment effects on private actions to improve learning (like reading to one's children) than on CA-dependent actions (like going to a meeting)
- We also tried to measure the degree of social capital in the community

Social Capital Index

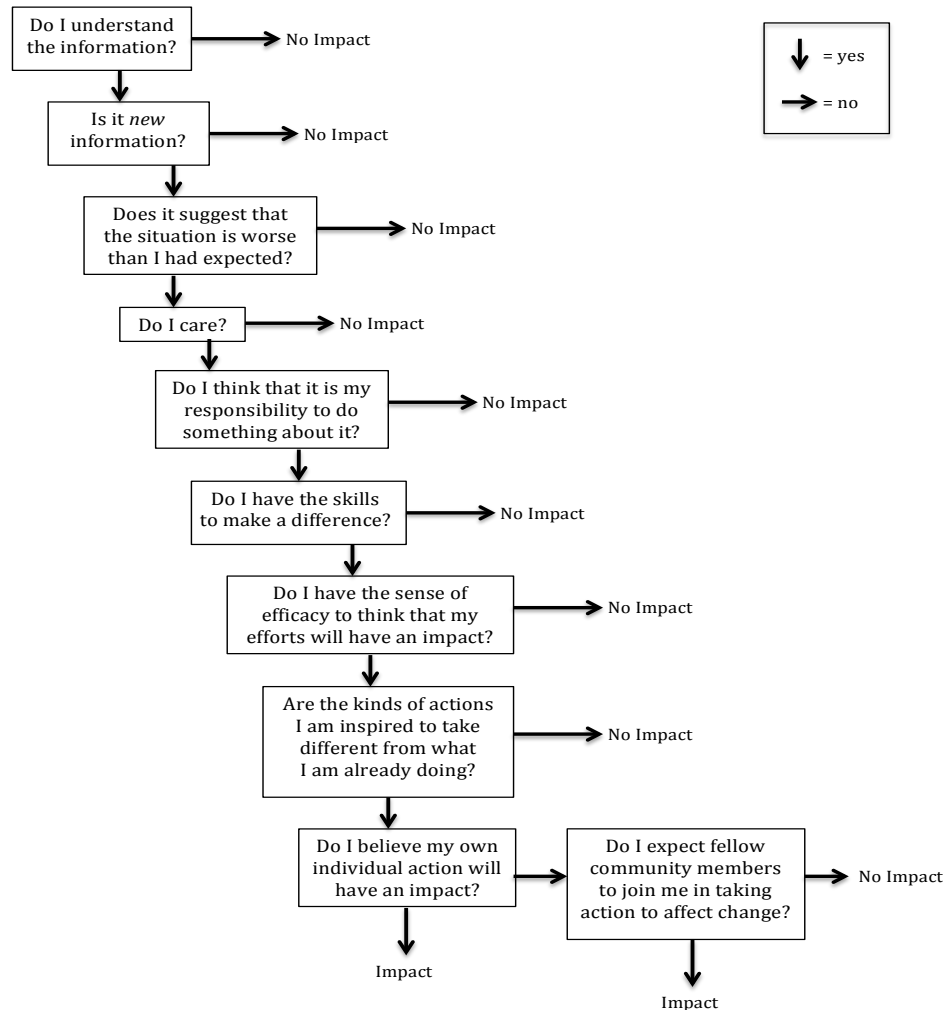
- Suppose that you had to leave your house to do something and you had a 3 or 4 year old child who needed someone to look after them. How many people in the village do you know with whom you would be willing to leave your child?
- If your family needed money equal to half a year's income, how many people do you know in the village who would probably lend you that amount of money?
- Suppose something unfortunate happened to someone in the village, such as a serious illness, or his house burning down. How likely is it that some people in the community would get together to help this person?
- Suppose something unfortunate happened to the village as a whole, such as a fire, a drought or a flood. How likely is it that people in the community would help one another?
- If there were an electricity shortage or drought and people in the village were asked to use less electricity or water, how many people in the village do you think would voluntarily cooperate?"

Do Parents Expect Others to Join Efforts?

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- We also tried to measure the degree of social capital in the community
- We find no impact of the level of social capital in the community on treatment effects

Summary: What Explains the Null Finding?

- Lots of things! Pretty much every step in the information-citizen action causal chain constitutes a bottleneck.



Conclusion

- The Uwezo initiative exemplifies the new, bottom-up, information-focused approach to development
- Like many similar interventions, however, we find no evidence for its impact
- We believe this is due to the absence in our study setting of a series of unspoken and frequently unacknowledged conditions that must hold for the provision of information to generate citizen activism
- Implications follow for any effort to generate citizen activism by providing people with information about the quality of local service delivery