

ENERGY GOVERNANCE

Effective stakeholder engagement

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Practitioners and policy makers advocate that communities affected by natural resource extraction should be involved in the decision-making process along with private companies and governing bodies. Such stakeholder engagement is believed to benefit all parties: it provides a voice to local communities and information to decision makers. However, there have been few empirical evaluations of these efforts. Eric Coleman and collaborators from Florida State University, Maendeleo ya Jamii and Business-Community Synergies conducted a randomized controlled trial to test whether local communities affected by oil operations in Western Uganda benefit from a stakeholder engagement intervention.

In all villages included in the study, a village chairperson received an information packet based on community and local government concerns about oil and gas activities in the area, and disseminated this information in a village meeting. Each village in the treatment group additionally elected three individuals to attend a two-day multi-stakeholder forum with public and private sector representatives, who then reported back to their communities. Using data from baseline and endline household surveys in the control and treated villages, they found that the stakeholder engagement treatment improved perceptions of transparency, increased civic activity and improved overall satisfaction compared to information provision alone. These results suggest that stakeholder engagement efforts have positive short-term impacts on communities affected by the extractives sector, but future work is needed to assess long-term outcomes.

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