British Journal of Political Science (2025), **55**, e68, 1–13
doi:10.1017/S0007123424001066

British Journal of Political Science

LETTER

Trustworthy Media and Gender Gaps in Political Participation after Civil War: Experimental Evidence from Rural Liberia

Eric Mvukiyehe

Department of Political Science, Duke University, Durham, NC, USA
Email: Eric.mvukiyehe@duke.edu

(Received 20 June 2023; revised 29 June 2024; accepted 30 December 2024)

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of media exposure on gender gaps in political participation in post-war Liberia. Five weeks prior to the 2011 general election, women eligible voters in randomly selected villages were provided radio sets and organized to listen to and discuss a series of elections-related programmes from a 'trusted' United Nations radio in group settings. Results show the programme had positive effects on measures of women's political participation, but not on men's political behaviours, suggesting potential narrowing of gender gaps. Results also show the programme improved the quality of women's political engagement in a way that reflected their own preferences and voting autonomy. Mediation analysis suggests that programme effects likely occurred through enhanced women's political knowledge and efficacy and by harnessing coordination and mobilization potential of pre-existing civil society groups of a political character.

Keywords: information; political participation; gender gaps; field experiment; Liberia

Introduction

Gender gaps in political participation are a pervasive challenge throughout the developing world (Prillaman 2023; Robinson and Gottlieb 2021; Gottlieb 2016; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). A common source of persistent gaps is limited access to political information, hampering citizens' ability to formulate their preferences or effectively communicate those preferences to their representatives (Giné and Mansuri 2018; Grossman, Humphreys and Sacramone-Lutz 2014; Banerjee et al. 2011). The problem is particularly severe in war-torn countries, where violence tends to exacerbate existing inequities in access to information or other critical resources that may mediate political participation (Bakken and Buhaug 2021; Platteau, Somville andWahhaj 2014; Buvinic et al. 2013). Media outlets, typically owned or controlled by the elites, tend to offer partisan and biased information (Arsenault, Himelfarb and Abbott 2011), while elites often use their position to limit the release of relevant information through secrecy laws or intimidation (Conroy-Krutz 2018).

Prior research suggests that politically relevant information can help flatten gender disparities (Grossman, Humphreys and Sacramone-Lutz 2014; Mvukiyehe and Samii 2017; Giné and Mansuri 2018; Finkel 2002; Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster 2020; Banerjee et al. 2011; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). However, our understanding of this link is still limited for at least three reasons. First, existing studies have not paid adequate attention to women's access to

Table 1. Test of candidate mediating mechanisms for UNMIL radio programme

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Treatment on mediator	Outcome-mediator	Share explained
Mean index of Political efficacy	0.26***	0.28***	0.34
	[0.10]	[0.08]	[13.78]
	(0.061, 0.444)	(0.117, 0.436)	(0.045, 1.624)
Mean Index of Liberal Orientations	0.00	0.10	0.00
	[0.10]	[0.10]	[7.17]
	(−0.197, 0.209)	(−0.075, 0.299)	(−0.293, 0.153)
Mean Index of Coordination	0.29***	0.11	0.14
	[0.10]	[0.09]	[4.80]
	(0.086, 0.480)	(−0.069, 0.273)	(−0.149, 0.716)

Notes: Column 1 reports the treatment effect of the programme on the mediator candidate index and its components, and Column 2 reports the association between the political participation index and the mediator candidate index for the control group only. Column 3 reports the product of Column 1 and Column 2, divided by the treatment effect of the programme on political participation. Column 3 is the share of the treatment effect explained by the candidate mediator. Standard errors are reported in brackets. Bootstrap Confidence Intervals are reported in parentheses.

information in the first place, overlooking the tendency of men's control of critical resources, such as radio or mobile phones that mediate political participation (Cheema et al. 2023; Gazeaud et al. 2023). As Gillwald, Milek and Stork (2010) note in their multi-country study, 'although women may be at home more, they tend to listen to the radio less than men, even though they might have a similar education and income. This is often due to the nature of their work or to not having access to a radio or not being able to select which programs to listen to if male members of the household are present.' Second, while a growing number of interventions target women through civic and voter education campaigns designed to provide politically relevant information (Giné and Mansuri 2018; Ichino and Nathan 2017; Preece 2016), few of these interventions are gender-sensitive, let alone transformative. Some studies have suggested such interventions may backfire if gender aspects are not seriously taken into account (see Gottlieb's (2016) study in war-torn Mali).[1] Third, the credibility of information sources is too often taken for granted (Banerjee et al. 2011) – a particular problem in war-torn countries, where independent media capable of providing objective and credible information to voters tends to be in short supply (Badrinathan 2021; Peisakhin and Rozenas 2018; Deane 2013).

This study, in the context of Liberia's 2011 general election, investigates the effect of politically relevant information provided through mass media on rural women's political participation. It leverages the 'access to information' pilot programme that aimed to increase women's exposure to special elections programming by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Radio, which enjoyed unrivalled popularity and trust among Liberian voters at the time. Implemented by a local civil society organization, the intervention (i) provided a radio to groups of women in treated villages and (ii) organized them to participate in a series of weekly group sessions focused on listening to and discussing UNMIL radio's special elections programmes. This intervention was premised on information constraints – unlike other barriers embedded in existing power structures, or unequal access to material resources, difficult to eliminate in the short-term – being more malleable, and addressable relatively quickly and at a lower cost (Giné and Mansuri 2018).

The intervention ran for five weeks in the two months preceding the general election in November 2011, followed by endline surveys in treatment and control communities shortly after the elections. I collected data on a broad range of attitudinal and behavioural outcomes from a sample of women who were the direct target of the intervention and a sample of men who were not directly targeted by the intervention, to ascertain its impacts on (i) the level and quality of

[1]Notable exceptions include Cheema et al. (2023) experimental study of a canvassing intervention in Pakistan that targeted women and men voters.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066 Published online by Cambridge University Press

women's political participation and (ii) the flattening of gender gaps in political participation. This paper reports findings from the experiment and discusses their implications for policy and future research.

In the rest of this paper, I describe the experimental design and empirical strategy in Section 2, present results in Section 3, discuss potential mechanisms in Section 4, and conclude in section 5.

Experimental Design and Data

The Context

Descriptive statistics from Afrobarometer data show that in post-war Liberia, women's participation rates lag behind the rates of their male counterparts on measures such as voting, community involvement, and associational life, as well as on such attitudinal indicators as interest in public affairs or political efficacy.[2] For instance, when it comes to actual political behaviours, men outpaced women in participatory measures. A notable 78.3 per cent of men feel they can freely join political organizations, a freedom that only 69.2 per cent of women feel they have (See Figure SI 3). A similar pattern exists with respect to attitudinal measures. Men tended to engage in political conversations more frequently, with 18 per cent reporting regular discussions compared to 8 per cent of women (Figure SI 2). Interestingly, in the realm of political efficacy, women seem to exhibit a stronger resolve to question leadership, diverging from men's tendency to show deference to authority. These gaps are notably wider in rural areas than in urban areas. Key barriers contributing to these gaps include low access to political information owing to lack of control over information media such as radio, and low usage of mobile phones and internet access. For instance, according to DHS data, the proportion of women owning information sources is low, with merely 36.6 per cent of women owning radios and 34.5 per cent owning cell phones (See Figures SI 9 and SI 10). Afrobarometer data also indicates similar findings: fewer than 53.6 per cent of women have ever used mobile phones, and more than 90 per cent of women lack access to the internet (See Figure SI 11 and SI 12), even for those with primary education or higher.

Over half the women surveyed by the United Nations (2014) reported either not having access to quality information or were uncertain whether they had access: radio was identified as the most frequent source of news and information about politics.[3] The Carter Center likewise concluded that Liberian 'women do not access information as easily or as frequently as do men'.[4] Liberia typified postwar societies: a low information environment with poor media infrastructure and limited media choices, along with a lack of in-depth reporting, source transparency issues, and a tendency to align with government narratives (Fair 2013; Spurk, Lopata and Keel 2010). Liberian women have been targets of misinformation and disinformation, especially during electoral campaigns (Adams 2016; Anderson, Diabah and Afrakoma hMensa 2011).

Increasing access to political information (qualitatively and quantitatively) has been integral to postwar peacebuilding efforts.[5] Whether these efforts have translated into narrowing gender gaps in media consumption and political participation is our still-open empirical question.

[2]In Supplemental Information (SI) 1, I draw on data from the Afrobarometer and the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) to provide detailed descriptive information on three critical asphadects of local Liberian context and this study: gender gaps in political participation, both political behaviour and attitudes (SI 1A); the main barriers to women's political participation – in particular gender gaps in access to reliable political information and control over information media (SI 1B); and the role of radios as a key source of information to rural women, relative to other media sources, as well as gender gaps in radio ownership and listenership (SI 1C). I also briefly describe heterogeneity in Liberian women's media consumption and political participation across such other socioeconomic characteristics as age, income, and education level (SI 1D).

[3]https://www.un.org/democracyfund/sites/www.un.org.democracyfund/files/final-baseline_study_report-2.pdf.

[4]See Center (2014) detailed publication https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/ati/women-and-ati-10172014.pdf here.

[5]See detailed publication here.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Intervention and hypotheses

Established in 2003 at the end of Liberia's 14-year civil war, UNMIL Radio is a popular information source with the widest radio coverage in the country. It filled an important media void and was perceived as the most objective and trustworthy information source.[6] As one of the Radio's first producers put it: 'Coming out of a war in which the local media had been a part, the people of Liberia were desperate for a voice they could trust'.[7] While UNMIL Radio enjoyed widespread listenership and high credibility, listenership levels have been uneven, with women generally having less opportunity than men to access and engage with its programming (Mvukiyehe and Samii 2017, 2010). The 'access to information' pilot programme sought to overcome this informational barrier to women voters and enable equal participation in the political process. The intervention (i) provided women in selected communities with a radio and (ii) organized them to participate in a series of weekly group listening sessions to UNMIL Radio's special programmes on elections.

The information component of the intervention focused on five special election programmes.[8] Some programmes, such as *Dis Voting Ting*, provided civic education about the importance of political participation, while others, such as *Back to the Ballot Box*, informed voters about the voting process (for example, how to correctly cast the vote or the importance of secret balloting). *Political Happenings and Hot Seat* brought voters information about political campaigns and served as a forum for political aspirants to debate their agendas. Finally, *Around Town* was an open mic programme allowing voters from different towns to express their opinions about the upcoming elections and their expectations from aspirant leaders.

Listening groups of women were set up in randomly allocated treatment communities to isolate programme effects. Participants met three times per week to listen to a specific electoral programme in real-time, followed by a discussion facilitated by trained staff from the implementing partner organization. For the fourth weekly meeting, groups were joined by staff from the implementing partner to listen to and discuss a pre-recorded programme. Implementing staff recorded a range of information, including the number of women and men attending the sessions, topics discussed, participants' opinions and reactions, and level of enthusiasm for engagement with the topics. Each session lasted two hours on average. In this bundled treatment, combining radio provision, information provision, and to some extent facilitated group – each of which could have an independent effect – I focus on the information provision treatment, conceptually aligning this study with other civic and voter education interventions (for example, Hyde, Lamb and Samet (2023), Finkel and Lim (2021), and Mvukiyehe and Samii (2017)), where the treatment of interest is the political information being transmitted rather than the medium of transmission.[9]

Importantly, while the programme was explicit in its goal of focusing on women, men were not explicitly excluded or discouraged. Though the discussions were largely driven by issues and concerns prioritized by the women, in most villages a relatively high proportion of men (20 per cent on average) also attended the sessions. Each intervention consisted of at least fifteen listening sessions over a period of five weeks. The partner organization monitored programme implementation weekly, in addition to their role in facilitation.

[6]SI 2A provides further detail and descriptive statistics about trustworthiness of UNMIL Radio.

[7]https://unmil.unmissions.org/story-unmil-book-unmil-radio-keeping-liberians-informed.

[8]The information component of the intervention focused on five special election programmemes (described in SI 2B).

[9]Furthermore, the approach to focus on the information despite the bundled nature of the treatment is common to other studies of political (or social) information via media. Most recent examples include Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster (2020) study in Sierra Leone, Paluck, Blair and Vexler (2010) study in South Sudan and Paluck (2009) study in Rwanda. Further research should disentangle independent effects of each component.

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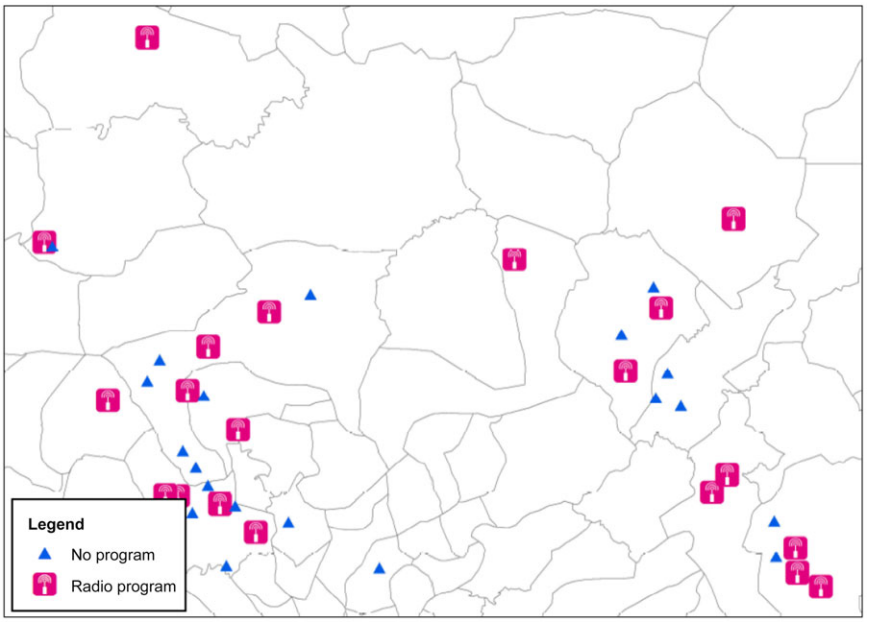

Figure 1. Study Locations.

UNMIL Radio was by far the most trusted news source compared to other local media outlets, deemed the most reliable and detailed in its coverage of political happenings and news; community radio was a distant second choice, attracting one listener for every five UNMIL radio listeners.[10] UNMIL Radio's trustworthiness matters as a key driving factor behind its popularity with the Liberian public – both women and men – especially on electoral issues (and general political issues), making it the most appropriate medium for this treatment.

Identification strategy

The study targeted forty rural communities, with an average village size of around 1,500 households. I used a matched pairs design as a basis for selection. First, the local partner organization selected eighty communities from two counties (Bomi and Rural Montserrado) deemed potential beneficiaries of the programme. The research team then carried out a community assessment survey in each of these to gather demographic and socioeconomic statistics based on the 2008 census by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), a government agency. This information was used along with the staff's own knowledge of these areas to create community pairs that were similar in terms of geographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as population size, number of adult women, quality of dwellings, access to main roads, infrastructure quality, ethnicity, religion, and economic activity. The radio programme was assigned to one community in each pair by rolling a die. Figure 1 depicts the forty study towns by treatment status.

[10]SI 2A and SI 11B respectively provide detailed information about the role of the trustworthiness of UNMIL radio relative to other media sources and extensive qualitative evidence shedding light on various aspects of the programme.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Outcomes measurement and data

Following the empirical literature, I define political participation as activities by citizens that are aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or government policy (Mvukiyehe 2018; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). This definition is broad enough to encompass both formal/institutional forms of participation such as voting or involvement in electoral processes and less formal/institutional forms of participation such as participation in community meetings or contacting traditional leaders (Gottlieb's 2016; Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010). Modes of political participation used in the survey were organized around dimensions established in the empirical literature (Mvukiyehe and Samii 2017; Mvukiyehe 2018; Bratton 1999):

- *The voting mode*, encompassing voting in the 2011 election;
- *The campaigning mode*, including contributions in time and/or money to a political campaign and political rally attendance;
- *The contacting mode*, including contact with one's representative in the national assembly or senate, or contact with a government official or agency;
- *The communing mode*, encompassing community meeting attendance, speech and the contacting of community leaders;
- *The protesting mode*, encompassing a wide range of variables such as political demonstrations or calling into radio stations to complain about public officials.

The study estimates programme effects on each of these modes of political participation (as well as their constitutive indicators) and on the overall measure of political participation that combines some or all these dimensions.

Sample and data collection

Data collection targeted all forty villages in the sample (twenty each of the treatment and control villages). Given that the unit of treatment in this study is the village, my sampling frame encompasses all eligible female and male voters in each village. In each village, I conducted interviews with a sample of fifteen households – ten with female respondents and five with male respondents – which I estimated to be adequate for the analysis.[11] The total target sample comprises 400 females and 200 males. The response rate was an astonishing 97 per cent – a feat achieved thanks to flexible scheduling designed around women's availability – providing a strongly suggestive technique for avoiding bias in who gets treated and who gets surveyed.

Household surveys served as my main source of outcome data.[12] Additionally, observable (behavioural) measures of many outcomes were included as a cleaner indicator of individuals' propensity to participate (for example, sending a message to political leaders or signing a petition calling on presidential candidates to abstain from election violence), which are designed to send a costly signal (Collier and Vicente 2014). I developed the survey instrument in collaboration with LISGIS, the implementing agency, and refined it through several rounds of pilot testing and field testing. I employed the same survey instruments in both the female and male samples. Survey interviews were conducted by experienced, professional enumerators from LISGIS trained by the Research Team and for the most part, were delivered in Liberian English, which most respondents understood and spoke.

Fieldwork for both rollout and data gathering took place from August–December 2011.[13]

[11]Details about sample selection are provided in SI 3.

[12]Each of the outcome modes listed above was measured through specific indicators, summarized in SI 5.

[13]Figure SI 38 in SI 2F provides the detailed timeline, including intervention and data collection.

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Analysis and Results

Estimation strategy

The programme was successfully rolled out across all twenty targeted villages. Attendance levels were relatively high throughout the fifteen facilitated sessions available over a five-week intervention period.[14]

The main analysis focuses on the intervention's Intent-To-Treat (ITT) effects, thereby considering all adult individuals in treated communities as programme beneficiaries, regardless of whether or the extent to which they participated in the programme (to wit, weekly listenership sessions). Having achieved balance (see SI 2E), I fit regression models of outcomes on an indicator variable for the intervention. I estimate programme effects on both individual outcome indicators and on the 'overall' aggregate measure of political participation. For the latter, an index measure was calculated by averaging across standardized means of individual outcome indicators. I estimate the following linear regression:

$$Y_{iv} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{UNMIL Radio}_v + X_v\delta + \varepsilon_{iv} \quad (1)$$

Where:

- Y_{iv} : is the overall standardized participation score for individual i in village v. This measure has two additional variations – one that captures overall political participation through institutionalized forms (for example, voting, attending political rallies, etc.) and less institutionalized forms (for example, attending village meetings or contacting traditional leaders.)
- *UNMILRadio* : is a dummy variable indicating whether the village received the intervention or not.
- X : represents matched pair fixed effects. I control for this to allow for the possibility that there are differences between pairs that influence political participation.
- ε_{iv} is an error term assumed to be clustered at the village level.

To avoid over-rejection of the null hypothesis due to multiple comparisons, I also estimate Average Standardized Treatment Effects (ASTEs) following the approach pioneered by Kling et al. (2007).[15]

For marginal effects on individual outcome indicators, since most of these are dichotomous, I estimate a *probit* model with a simple regression equation of the following general form:

$$Pr(Y_{it}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{UNMIL Radio}_t + X_t\delta + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

Where: $Pr(Y_{it} = 1)$: is the probability of person i in town t engaging in the relevant political activity. Each of the outcome indicators of political participation is binary and takes on the value of 1 if the person is engaged in it and 0 otherwise. All other terms are defined as in equation 1.

Results

The primary focus in this analysis is on the UNMIL Radio programme's effects on women's political participation; this will be the locus of the discussion, while the effects of the programme on gender gaps are ascertained indirectly by way of comparing outcomes for the two genders. Figure 2 presents the mean effects of UNMIL Radio on women's (and men's) political participation estimated with OLS regressions. Figure 3 presents marginal effects on individual

[14]SI 2G provides descriptive statistics about programme take up. Table SI 3 analyzes attendance records collected by programme facilitators. SI 11B (Tables SI 23 and SI 24) provides qualitative evidence from detailed field facilitators' observations of session dynamics and direct participants' quotes reflecting on the programme and what it meant to them.

[15]The results are consistent with those presented herein and are reported in SI 8.

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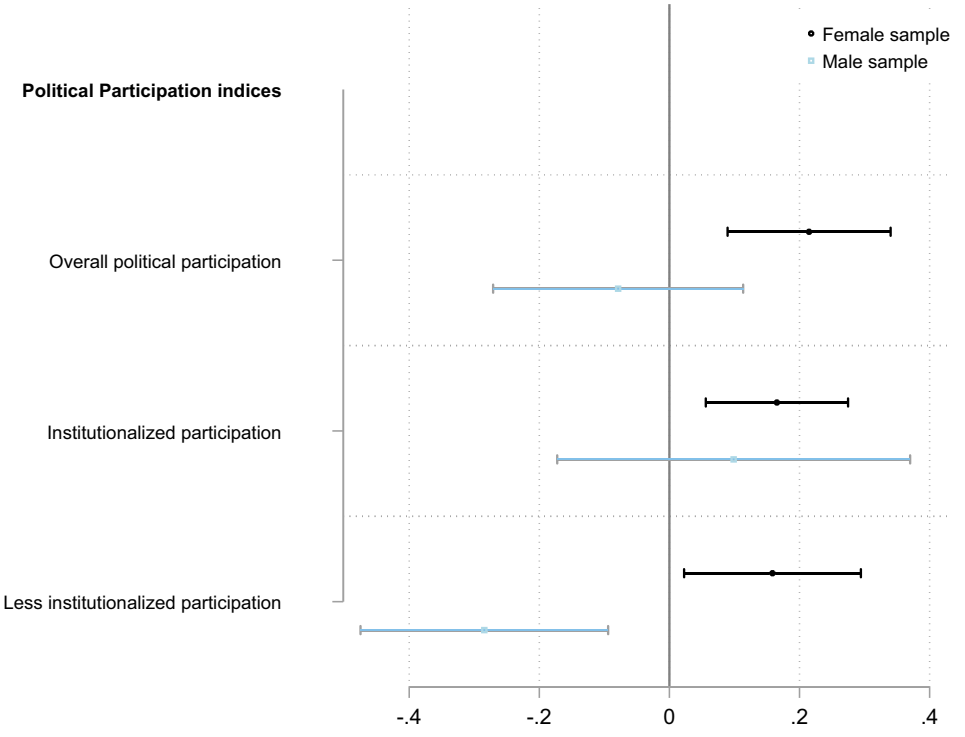

Figure 2. Effects on political participation indices.

outcome indicators from probit estimations.[16] I also check the robustness of my findings by controlling for unbalanced (pre-treatment) covariates.[17]

As can be seen in Figure 2, the intervention has positive effects on the overall political participation of women, with an estimated mean effect of 0.21 standard deviations, statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. The effects are virtually similar for more institutional/formal and less institutional/informal forms of political participation. These effect sizes represent a relatively large difference in participation rates between communities that did and did not receive the intervention. Further, from Figure 3, it appears that these effects are mostly driven by voting, participation in political rallies, protests, attendance, and speaking at local community meetings unrelated to the intervention.

I estimate a 5 percentage point increase in the attendance of community meetings and a 10 percentage point increase in the probability of speaking out in such gatherings, the measures that displayed the largest gender gaps initially. These results are significant at the 5 per cent levels or better.

By contrast, the results on the men's sample show no evidence of the programme's positive effects on overall levels or individual outcome measures of participation. If anything, results on a few individual level outcomes – in particular political rallies attendance, contacting government officials and traditional leaders, and attending and speaking at community meetings – show relatively large negative and statistically significant effects on men but, again, the overall mean effects are null. The results on men are not unexpected because they were not specifically targeted by the programme and suggest that, contrary to findings in other studies (for example, Gottlieb 2016), the presence of men in listenership sessions did not have perverse effects on women's political participation. Taken together, these results suggest that even short-term and logistically

[16]Detailed results are also reported in Table SI 10A in SI 4.
[17]SI 10B presents results, which are robust.

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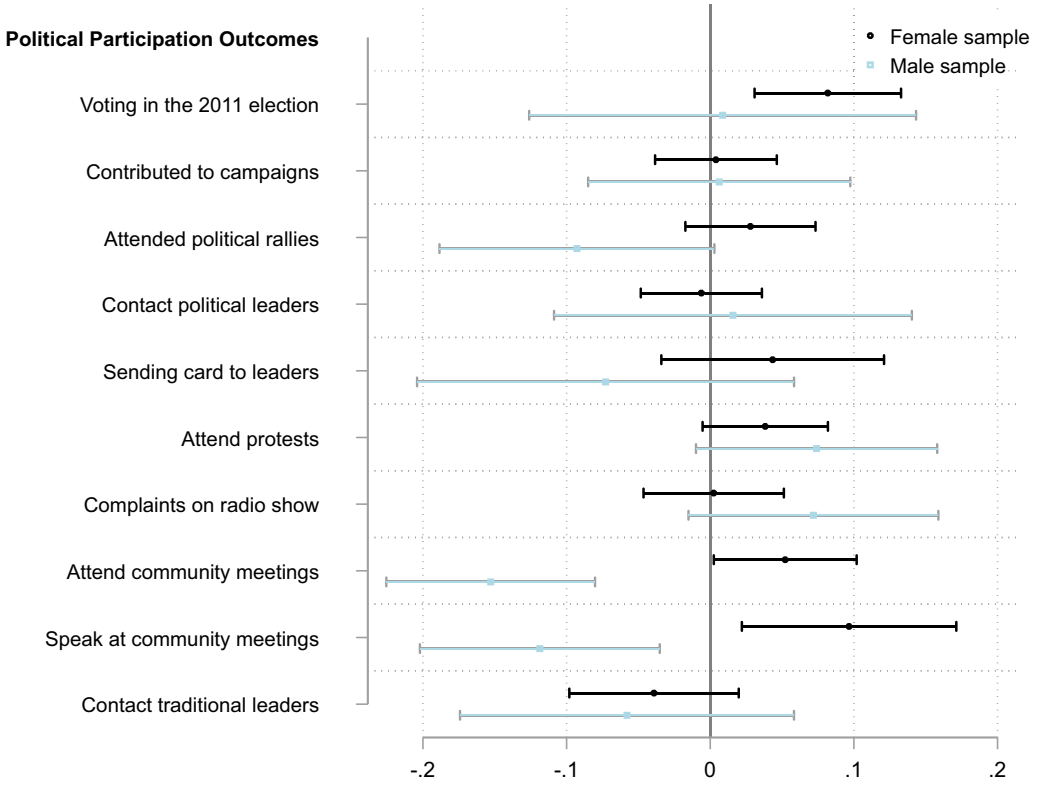

Figure 3. Effects on political participation outcomes.

less demanding broadcast interventions enhance women's political participation without necessarily increasing or taking away from men, thereby contributing to the narrowing of gender gaps in political participation.

The study also looked at the heterogeneous effects on several dimensions, including marital status, age, schooling, employment and income, and by information sources.[18] Overall, the results, while tentative, do suggest the programme effects were concentrated among women with low information at the baseline (for example, those with no formal schooling, unpaid work, below median income, etc.) Finally, I also investigate potential geographic spillovers. I do not expect significant spillovers because the villages are relatively distant from one another (the minimum and median distance between two pairs of treatment and control villages is around three and twenty-two km respectively), and accessibility is difficult.[19] Even if spillovers were present, this would suggest my estimates underestimate the true effects. Out of thoroughness, I performed a formal analysis for geographical spillovers (See SI 9 for detailed method and estimates): the programme effect is robust to the inclusion of nearby treated or control households in the female sample.

Mechanisms

This section explores the extent to which the three candidate mechanisms may help explain the relatively strong observed intervention impacts on women's political participation. I analyze three

[18]Results are presented in SI 7 (Tables SI 11 to SI 16).

[19]Walking is the most common means of transportation from one village to another; it may take several hours, which many women cannot afford, particularly not at nighttime.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066 Published online by Cambridge University Press

potential channels linking information provision to political participation: (i) political knowledge and efficacy – women's understanding of politics and their sense of empowerment to influence political leaders; (ii) liberal orientations – support for liberal norms and values such as political tolerance or non-violence;[20] and (iii) group dynamics geared towards collective action.[21] To formally test these mechanisms, I perform mediation analysis following the approach proposed by (Heller et al. 2017). Bootstrap Confidence Intervals were constructed by calculating 5,000 iterations. The results are reported in Table 1.[22]

As can be seen in Column 1, the UNMIL Radio programme had a direct positive and statistically significant effect on two of the candidate mediators – political efficacy and group coordination (0.26 and 0.29 standard deviations, respectively.) The liberal orientations mechanism shows no explanatory power. Results from Column 2 suggest 'political efficacy and knowledge' to be the most plausible candidate mechanism of the observed impact, explaining a third of the total programme effects. The association between women's political participation and the group coordination mediator index is positive; though not statistically significant at the conventional level, the share of the total effects of UNMIL Radio explained by the group coordination mechanism is a respectable 14 per cent. Notably, the results on individual outcome indicators that make up this index measure reveal that UNMIL Radio had a positive and statistically significant effect on all three indicators associated with membership in civil society groups of a political character (that is, women's group, peace committee, and democracy/human rights) but not with other group types (for example, economic associations).

The correlations between women's political participation and these measures are positive, though barely statistically significant, or not at all – possibly due to low power – and the respective shares of total programme impact explained by these mediators are not trivial (8 per cent, 23 per cent, and 18 per cent, respectively.) These results suggest that one way in which the UNMIL Radio programme worked was by activating (or harnessing) the coordination and mobilization potential of pre-existing groups of a political character that were already prepared to take full advantage of the trustworthy information the programme provided. This is consistent with findings from research on the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) that suggest they apply social pressure that in turn increases political participation (Weinschenk et al. 2018). In a similar vein, Hibbs (2022) argues that grassroots-facilitated discussions akin to those in this intervention are key to women's achieving increased empowerment, as they provide space for women to discuss their political views, and promote the language of advocacy, leading towards greater political activism and mobilization.[23]

SI 11B provides detailed qualitative evidence that largely supports the quantitative findings, suggesting political efficacy and group coordination as the mechanisms likely at work, though a handful of quotes also speak to the political orientation mechanism.[24] In both sets, key themes emphasized by the women include increased knowledge and confidence about the right to vote, voting procedures, and holding politicians accountable; the capacity to organize and to interact with politicians to express their needs; and the opportunity to exchange ideas with fellow residents. Further research is needed to adequately adjudicate these mechanisms.

[20]There is no consensus on a precise definition of 'liberal norms and values', but these are generally thought to include individual liberties, freedom of expression and choice, gender equality, respect for human rights, tolerance, among others (Mvukiyehe 2018).

[21]SI 11A provides further discussion of theoretical logics underpinning these mechanisms. These indices were constructed using the household survey variables (See Tables SI 6 to 8 for corresponding constitutive outcome definition).

[22]Table SI 20, 21 and 22 in SI 11A provides detailed results on disaggregated indicators constitutive of each mechanism candidate index.

[23]I briefly discuss the potential mechanism of social desirability bias in SI 10.

[24]Table SI 23 presents 26 anonymized quotes collected directly from programme participants, while Table SI 24 presents 24 observations gathered by field facilitators during the sessions or in their narrative reports.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Conclusion

This study's findings suggest that exposure to politically relevant information through trustworthy media sources can have meaningful effects on women's political participation and help flatten gender gaps, even in institutionally weak settings prone to information asymmetries and where traditional mechanisms of political mobilization such as political parties tend to be weak or disorganized (if they exist at all). While this paper finds suggestive evidence for political knowledge/efficacy and for group coordination mechanisms, it cannot make causal claims for the relationships found, nor can other potential mechanisms be ruled out. Experimentally altering the design of information provision interventions to further test the salience of the information itself vs. the experience of discussing it, for example, would be an important avenue for further research. Indeed, within the latter mechanism, it would be interesting to understand whether the effects on political participation occur through peer (social) pressure or through enhanced coordination. Understanding men's role in this process is also an important area that deserves further research. More research is also needed to ascertain the effects of different components of the types of bundled intervention studied here (for example, information, group facilitation, media type, etc.) and the extent to which they may be complements or substitutes. Finally, future research should investigate sustainability and the cost-effectiveness of such programmes.

Supplementary Material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066

Data Availability Statement. Replication data for this article can be found in Harvard Dataverse at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/IMJCJT.

Acknowledgements. This study would not have been possible without the very able contribution of Varney Kamara and Joseph Williams of Liberia Democracy Watch (LDW) as well as the many women and men who participated in the programme and my survey team to whom I am indebted. For helpful comments and feedback, I thank Jack Snyder, Page Fortna, Macartan Humphreys, Cyrus Samii as well as participants in the Resolution 1325 workshop in Uppsala, Sweden. Carlos Guastavino, Aanchal Bagga, Sarah Elven, Alejandra Aponte, and Nausheen Khan for outstanding research assistance. The study received IRB approval from Columbia University, Protocol: IRB-AAAI8753.

Funding Statement. This research was partly funded by Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA). Part of the research was conducted when the author was on a fellowship from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Competing Interests. None. Prior to this study, the author served as a consultant for the United Nations Office of Internal Services (UN-OIOS) and evaluated the United Nations Missions in Liberia (UNMIL), using population surveys. However, he and his team of researchers operated with full independence and had no conflict of interest that may have interfered with this research. At no point did the UN, UNMIL or Government of Liberia officials attempt to influence the course of the research, the analysis, drafting of research outputs or conclusions drawn.

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Cite this article: Mvukiyehe E (2025) Trustworthy Media and Gender Gaps in Political Participation after Civil War: Experimental Evidence from Rural Liberia. *British Journal of Political Science* 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424001066