

Political Party Organization and Women's Empowerment:
A Field Experiment in Ghana*

Nahomi Ichino¹ and Noah L. Nathan²

December 31, 2017

DRAFT - please do not cite or circulate

Gender gaps in participation and representation are common in new democracies, both at the elite level and at the grassroots. We investigate efforts to close the grassroots gender gap in rural Ghana, a patronage-based democracy in which a dense network of political party branches provides the main avenue for local participation. We report results from a randomized field experiment to address norms against women's participation and encourage women's participation ahead of Ghana's December 2016 elections. The treatment is a large community meeting presided over by the traditional chief, known locally as a *darbar*. We find null results. The treatment was hampered in part by its incomplete implementation, including by local political party leaders who may have feared an electorally-risky association with a controversial social message. The study emphasizes the importance of social norms in explaining gender gaps in grassroots politics in new democracies and contributes new evidence on the limitations of common civic education interventions used in the developing world.

*Special thanks to Johnson Oprea, Samuel Asare Akpanonku, and the staff of the National Commission of Civic Education (NCCE) for their partnership, as well as to Santiago Salcedo (CIES, Eldon Haini and IFP-Ghana, Christopher Fietze, Bismillah Eshenon, and seminar participants at WGAPE Abu Dhabi, the University of Michigan, MPSA 2017, and APSA 2017 who provided helpful feedback. Additional research assistance was provided by Thomas O'Mellick and Rebecca Sandberg. We thank the Electoral Commission of Ghana and the Ghana Statistical Service for access to data. The Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board (HSB-IRB) at the University of Michigan reviewed and approved this study as HUSIRB15282 and HUSIRB23456. The research was supported by the International Growth Centre (IGC) and the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies (CPS), Office of Research (UMOR), and College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA).

¹Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan, nichino@umich.edu.

²Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan, nathan@umich.edu.

Political Party Organization and Women's Empowerment: A Field Experiment in Ghana

Gender gaps in participation and representation are common in new democracies, both at the elite level and at the grassroots. We investigate efforts to close the grassroots gender gap in rural Ghana, a patronage-based democracy in which a dense network of political party branches provides the main avenue for local participation. We report results from a randomized field experiment to address norms against women's participation and encourage women's participation ahead of Ghana's December 2016 elections. The treatment is a large community meeting presided over by the traditional chief, known locally as a *darbar*. We find null results. The treatment was hampered in part by its incomplete implementation, including by local political party leaders who may have feared an electorally-risky association with a controversial social message. The study emphasizes the importance of social norms in explaining gender gaps in grassroots politics in new democracies and contributes new

evidence on the limitations of common civic education interventions used in the developing world.

December 31, 2017