

# Does Information Lead to More Active Citizenship? Evidence from an Education Information Intervention in Rural Kenya

Evan S. Lieberman  
Princeton

Daniel N. Posner  
UCLA

Lily L. Tsai  
MIT

CEGA-Twaweza Symposium on  
Impact Evaluation in African Development  
5 October 2013  
Dar es Salaam

# 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 project is to figure out why

# The Uwezo Initiative

- Large-scale information-based intervention designed to improve education outcomes by providing parents with information about children's learning
- Covers 3 countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda
- Intervention is repeated annually over 5 yrs (we study the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

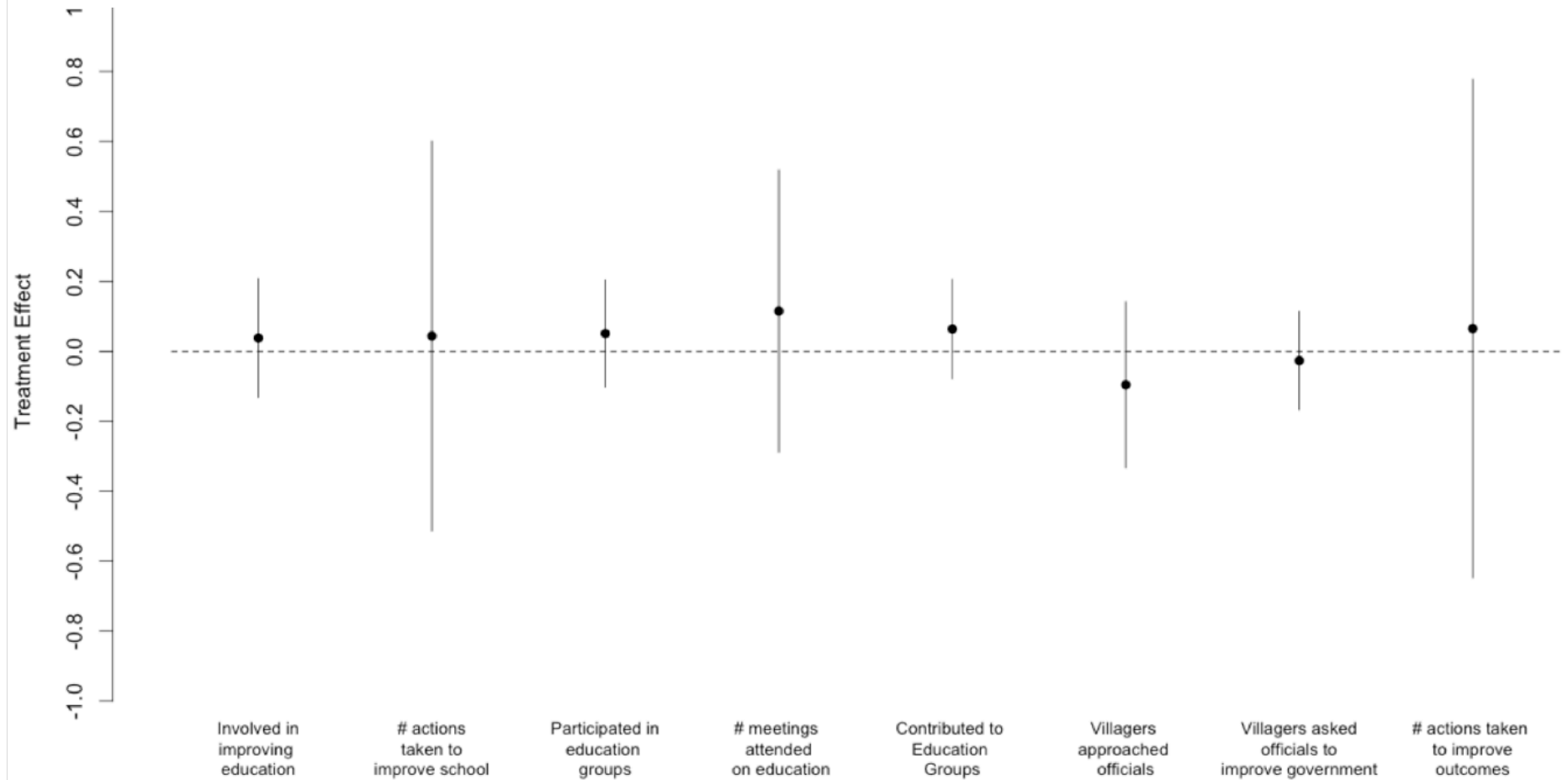
# Post-Treatment, Matched Village Design

- Two districts: Kirinyaga and Rongo
- Within each district, six non-contiguous villages selected at random from among the 30 that had received assessments (“treated villages”)
- Six additional 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 550 households

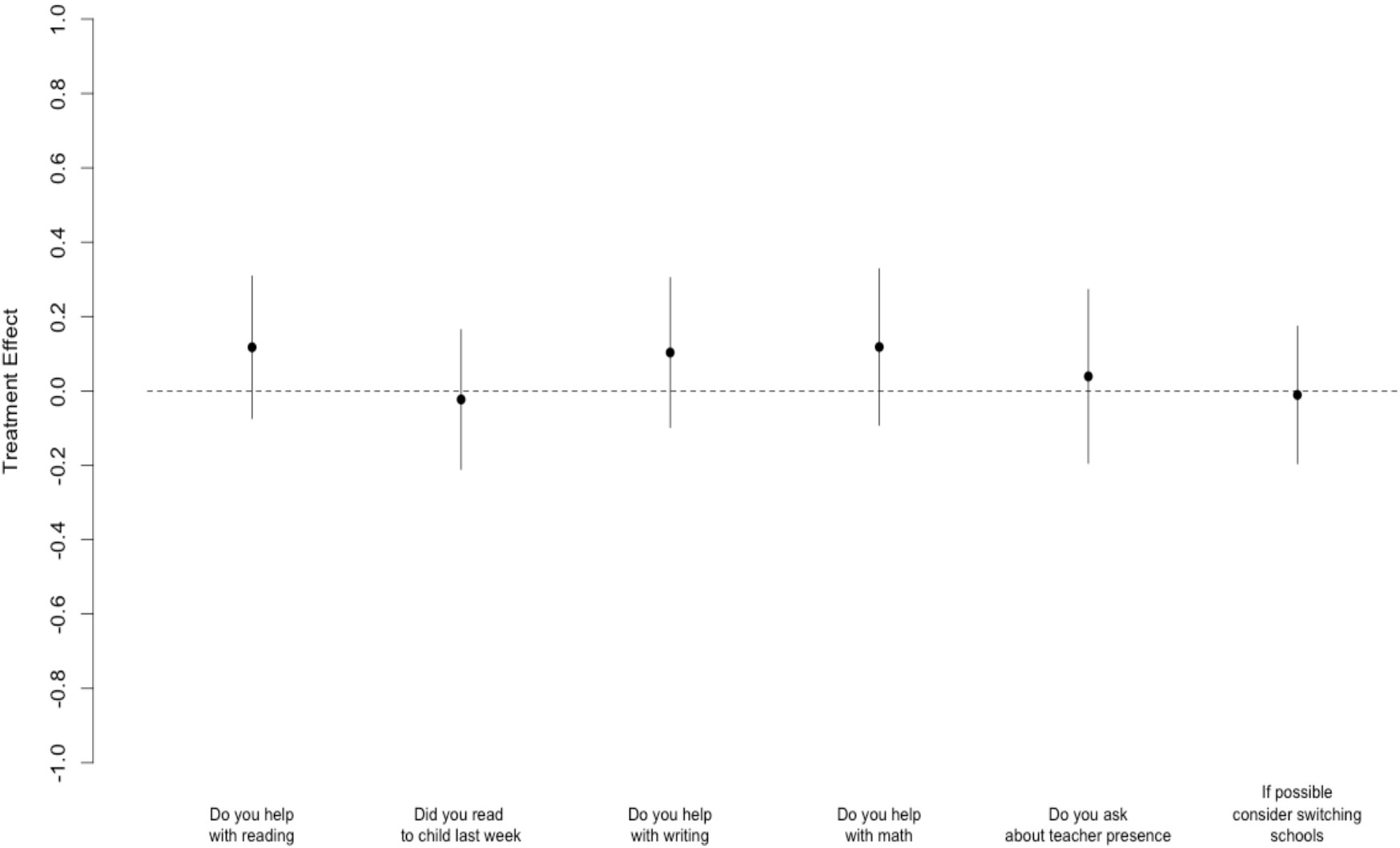
# Outcomes Measured via Household Survey

- Private actions at home to help one's own children
  - Do you help your child with reading, writing, math?
  - Do you ask your child about his/her teacher's attendance?
- 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?

# Average Treatment Effects: Citizen Actions



# Average Treatment Effects: Private Actions





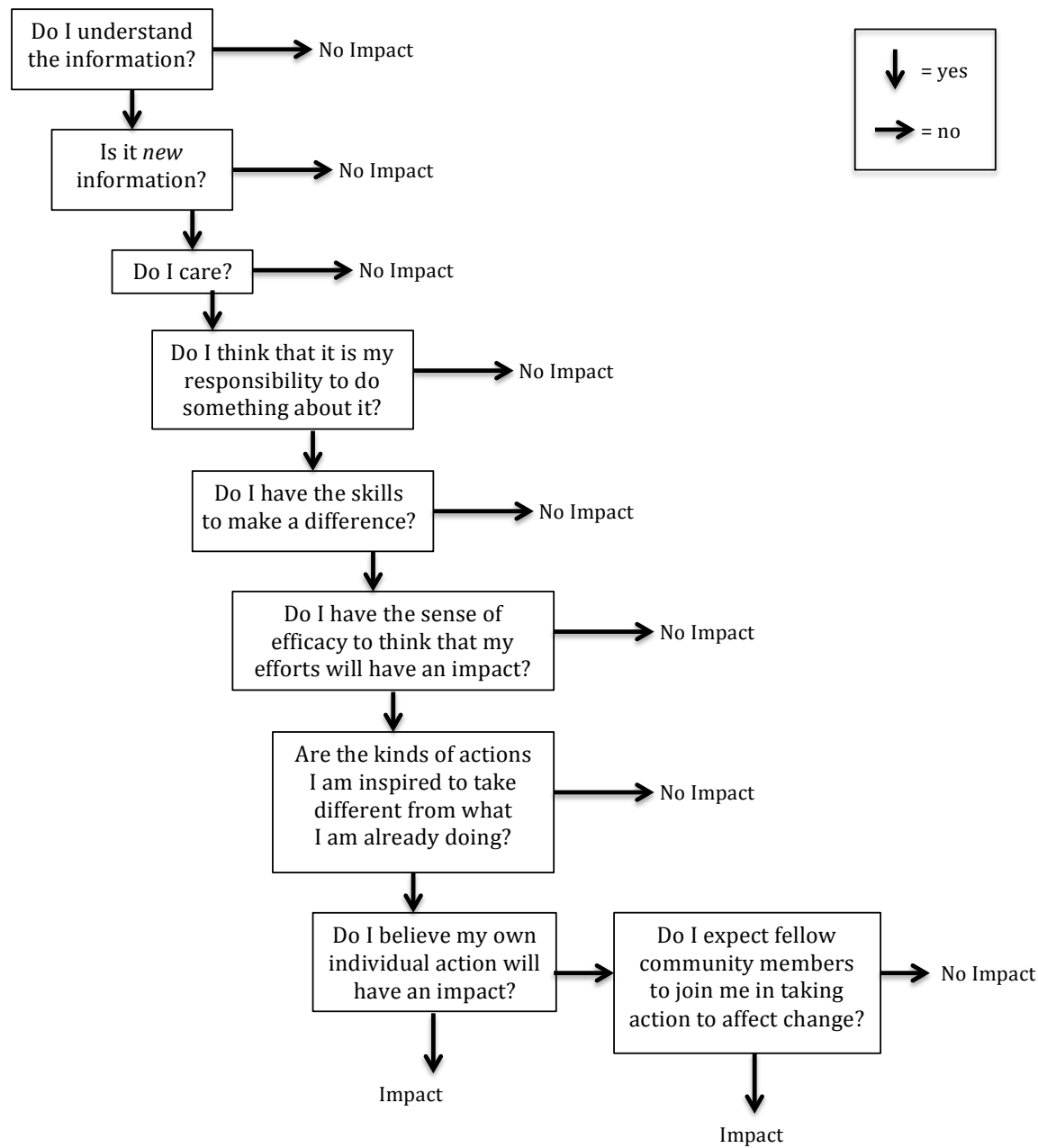
# Additional Confirmatory Evidence

- Focus groups and repeated visits to our 26 study villages
- Preliminary analysis of Tanzania baseline data
- Moreover, nothing we have learned in subsequent phases of our work in 2012-2013 has given us reason to rethink these null results.
  - Investigation of Uwezo-identified “success stories” in summer 2012
  - Findings during piloting of new research in summer 2013

# 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, out of 50-1,400) 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



# Conclusion

- The Uwezo initiative exemplifies the new, bottom-up, information-focused approach to development
- Like many similar interventions, we find no evidence for its impact on public actions, though suggestive evidence of a possible effect on private actions
- Our findings lead us to be skeptical of the transformative effects of information provision
- We believe the way forward is to pay greater attention to the conditions that must hold for the provision of information to generate citizen activism
- Our framework offers a template for probing those conditions