Field Experiments: Role of Post-Conflict Development

ARO MURI: Evolution of Cultural Norms and Dynamics of Socio-Political Change
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Motivation

- Presumed causal link between institutional quality and development.

- Development aid used as an institution building tool, recently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- But limited empirical evidence on development aid’s effectiveness.

- Methodological Challenge: Non-random assignment of aid
  - Randomized field experiments to deal with the problem of selection bias.
  - Examine both perceptions and objective measures of effects of development aid.
Location and Type of Intervention

- **Afghanistan:** Assess effect of elected institutions and grants
  - Security
  - Women’s Rights
  - Local Governance
  - Resource Allocation
  - **Data Collection Completed; Data Analysis and Paper Writing in Progress.**

- **Yemen:** Assess effect of information campaigns at the mosque
  - Civic Participation
  - Attitudes and Conflict towards other Ethnic Groups
  - Attitudes towards the West
  - Politically Motivated Grievances
  - **Data Collection, Data Analysis and Paper Writing all Pending.**
Context: National Solidarity Program (NSP)

- NSP is the largest development program in Afghanistan.
- Over 29,000 of Afghanistan’s 38,000 villages have received NSP.
- Sponsored by international donors and run by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.
- Implemented by NGOs in two main stages:
  - Election of Community Development Councils (CDCs) through secret-ballot election
    - Size of CDC proportional to size of community with equal number of males and females.
  - Project Selection
    - $200 per household; max community grant $60,000.
The evaluation estimates impacts by collecting data over four years in 500 villages:

250 NSP (treatment) & 250 non-NSP (control)
Evaluation Covers 10 Districts across 6 Provinces

Herat

Ghor

Balkh

Baghlan

Daykundi

Nangarhar
Sub-Treatment Interventions

- Comparing two ways of electing councils
  - Single Member Districts
  - Multi-member Districts

- Comparing two ways of selecting projects
  - Referendum
  - Community Consultation Meeting
Behavioral Intervention

- Compare outcomes of food aid distribution between villages with customary governance against villages with elected village councils.

- Distribution of food aid most common form of aid delivery in rural Afghanistan presenting leaders with option to distribute aid fairly or embezzle.

- Outcomes of interest:
  - 1) Quality of targeting
  - 2) Extent of corruption
Attitudinal Data

- **Survey Data:**
  - **Baseline Survey:** ~13,000 respondents in 500 villages including male heads of household, male focus groups, female focus groups and female individual questionnaire.
  - **Midline Survey:** ~15,000 respondents in 474 villages including male heads of household, female household members, male focus groups, and female focus groups.
  - **Endline Survey:** ~14,000 respondents in 447 villages including male heads of household, female household members, male focus groups, and female focus groups.
Data (cont.)

- **Monitoring Data:**
  - On elections: results from 1,675 post-vote interviews from 131 monitored villages and on project selection results from 1,238 post-selection interviews across 127 monitored villages.

- **Events Data:**
  - Geocoded security incidents as recorded by NATO across 6 provinces from 2003-2011.

- **Behavioral Data:**
  - Food Aid Distribution: ~20,000 respondents in 400 villages including male heads of household and female household members.
Deliverables from Afghanistan Project

- Paper on Hypotheses and Methodology; Instruments; Pre-Analysis Plans; Monitoring Reports all available online.

By end of 2013:
- Paper on Effects of Development Aid on Counterinsurgency Outcomes.
- Paper on Effects of Development Aid on Women’s Rights.
- Paper on Effects of Project Selection Decision Rules on Resource Allocation Outcomes.

By end of 2014:
- Paper on Effects of Type of Local Institutions on Local Governance Quality.
- Paper on Effects of Development Aid on State Building.
Preaching Peace: Assessing the Effects of Peace Sermons on Counter-Radicalization in Yemen

- Project focused on effects of “peace sermons” before Friday prayer at the mosque.

- Such an intervention will provide robust evidentiary basis on the effect of information campaigns at the mosque level on political grievances and radicalization.

- Particularly relevant at a time when more conservative Islamic powers are formally entering the political scene.
Intervention

- Project involves 24 religious leaders from different sects - 12 from Sanaa and 12 from Aden to offer variation on the different cleavages and tensions confronting Yemen.

- Each leader nominates 10 imams in their network, 5 of whom will be part of the sermon program the first year.

- The religious leaders agree on a set of 60 themes from the Qur’an and Hadith that are for peace, progress and coexistence.
Implementation (cont.)

- They link those themes to contemporary political realities that are confronting Yemen.
- These form the basis of a manual that will be used by a 6 member committee in charge of putting together a weekly newsletter that will be disseminated to participating imams.
- Each weekly newsletter will be motivated by a political theme linked to contemporary events in Yemen and will draw upon a relevant religious theme from the manual.
- The leaders as well as the preachers will be encouraged to use these themes in their Friday sermon each week.
Additional Interventions:

- **SMS:**
  - In addition to the newsletter, participating imams will get a key Quranic verse representing the main themes in the newsletter for that week.
  - People attending mosques of participating imams will also have the option to sign up for that free weekly sms which would be reinforcing the themes raised in that weekly sermon.

- **Study Circle Intervention:**
  - This intervention seeks to engage a sample of the most active students (on average 15 students per imam for a total of roughly 1800 students) and reinforce pro-peace influences in their training by providing reading materials that reinforce the message of peace and tolerance.
  - While this intervention affects a much smaller population, it is also much more highly targeted towards those who may eventually be at risk of radicalization.
Evaluation

- Evaluation relies on data generated from a group of 120 imams and their mosques receiving the intervention compared against data generated from another set of 120 comparable imams and mosques that are not receiving it.

- The randomization happens at the mosque level with mosques matched on a set of salient characteristics (such as imam age, education, tribal affiliation, socio-economic background, mosque size, neighborhood etc.)
Evaluation (cont.)

- We generate data on the effect of the program on radicalization looking at three different samples of the population:
  - Surveying a randomly selected number of individuals attending these 240 mosques.
  - Surveying a randomly selected number of individuals who are receiving the sms messages.
  - Surveying students in study circles in all these 240 mosques.
- Central to this assessment is the establishment of a comparable control group: because congregants self-enroll in the SMS service, we must compare those who receive these messages to a group who was self-selected on the same basis.
- This also holds for the study circle as those individuals are also self-selected.
Deliverables

- By end of 2013:
  - Methodology and Hypothesis Paper.
  - Instruments and Pre-analysis Plan.
  - Baseline Data Collection.

- By end of 2014:
  - First Round of Data Collection.
  - Report on Interim Results.
  - Paper on Short-Term Effects of Information Campaigns on Civic Engagement and Counter-Radicalization.

- By end of 2015:
  - Second Round of Data Collection.
  - Report on Final Results.
  - Paper on Medium-Term Effects of Information Campaigns on Civic Engagement and Counter-Radicalization.