Key findings:

- The combination of training on social accountability and dissemination of scorecard information on project quality leads to improvements of household welfare.
- For livestock sub-projects, training and scorecard interventions increased the number of animals per household by 27% relative to the control group.
- The social accountability training improved the overall quality of community projects by 0.13 standard deviations.
- The interventions were most effective in areas facing higher risk of corruption as reported by local officials.
- Communities targeted by the training undertook approximately 40% more monitoring activities.
- The overall number of complaints to officials increased by 13%.
- 90% of communities articulated action plans to address potential corruption or service delivery issues.

Context

The second phase of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF2) was a large-scale USD $135 million Community-Driven Development Program (CDD) implemented by the Uganda Office of the Prime Minister in coordination with district and sub-county authorities. As part of the program, communities were invited to formulate projects and submit proposals to the government for funding. After approval, project funds were managed directly by community committees, who were responsible to deliver the selected projects. Community Social Accountability Committees were put in place and responsible for monitoring project progress and providing oversight within the community. Sub-county and district authorities also provided project oversight.

One of the innovations of the NUSAF2 project is that it mainstreamed an anti-corruption intervention in a CDD project. NUSAF2 was a highly decentralized project, funding over 10,000 sub-projects across Northern Uganda, creating the potential for governance challenges. The objective of the Transparency, Accountability and Anti-Corruption (TAAC) component was to strengthen transparency, accountability and anti-corruption, using the project as an entry point to develop improved feedback systems for communities, local authorities and others with a mandate to promote improved governance. The component was implemented by the Inspectorate of Government (IG) and consisted of both preventive and punitive anti-corruption measures.

Interventions to Promote Social Accountability

Trainings on social accountability and community monitoring taught communities how to identify and prevent cases of corruption and mismanagement. The training was implemented by 7 different civil society organizations (CSOs). Community members then elected additional representatives to strengthen existing social accountability committees. Members of the new committees pledged to participate in the training program, undertake monitoring of the project on behalf of the community, and report back to the community. Additional training was provided on creating community plans, and monitoring and report writing skills, with an emphasis on encouraging communities to reach out and make complaints to local and central government, including the IG if necessary.

A scorecard intervention showed communities how well their NUSAF2 project was performing, relative to other communities in their district. Six months after the training, a quality assessment of NUSAF2 projects was performed. Physical observations provided data on the quantity of outputs delivered and the quality of projects, this was used to construct a score for each livestock project. Community facilitators presented the scores to communities alongside a ranking of their community relative to other NUSAF2 communities in the same district. During this meeting, community members heard remarks from community leaders, listened to an explanation of scorecard components, and discussed how to use the results of the scorecard to improve service delivery and accountability in the community.

Scope of Impact Evaluation

Given the innovative nature of the interventions, a prospective randomized impact evaluation was put in place. The impact evaluation was designed and implemented in collaboration between the World Bank, the IG, partner researchers and Innovations for Poverty Action. The objective of the impact evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the social accountability training and of the scorecard intervention.

The evaluation is based on a large-sample randomized control trial. Out of 940 NUSAF2 projects, 634 were assigned to receive the training, and 306 were assigned to the control group. Among the sample, there were 574 livestock projects, of which 283 received scorecard intervention, and 291 were assigned to
a control group. Some communities received both the training and scorecard intervention, other communities received either the training or the scorecard intervention, and some communities received none of the interventions.

The main source of follow-up data for the impact evaluation consists of a sub-project assessment collected on average a year after the training, and before the scorecard intervention. A second round of follow-up data collection took place approximately 6 months later in the form of a household survey.

**Main Results: Effectiveness of Social Accountability Training and Scorecards**

The impact evaluation results show that combining both the social accountability training and the scorecard intervention had statistically significant and large effects on household welfare. For livestock projects, households in communities that receive both interventions are found to have significantly more cattle and greater total household assets. The effects on cattle are large and they represent 0.61 additional animals per household, an increase of 27% relative to the control group.

Importantly, it is the combination of the social accountability training and scorecard intervention that drives the observed impacts on household welfare. The training or the scorecard alone did not have any impact on household welfare.

The results also show that the social accountability training intervention led to small improvements the quality of community projects. The effects are of small but significant magnitude (0.135 standard deviations). This overall improvement in community sub-projects is driven by a mix of increase in quantity and improvements in quality of outputs obtained by communities. In livestock projects (the most common in the sample), the social accountability training led to an increase in the number of animals as well as a reduction by 29% (from 18.4% to 13.9%) of animals that could not be found in the communities at the time of the follow-up sub-project assessment.

**What Explains Observed Impacts?**

One of the main findings is that the training and scorecard interventions are most effective in areas that were considered by local officials as more likely to face corruption. During a survey of local leaders conducted before the program, officials were asked to identify areas near them — but not including their own — that they thought faced significant issues in terms of corruption or mismanagement. Results show that the program impacts are largest in areas that were perceived to be more corrupt or mismanaged by local officials. In these areas, the program is cost-effective.

Results show that stronger monitoring of NUSAF2 sub-projects by communities is the main mechanism through which the interventions were effective. Community members were more engaged in ensuring they were receiving quality project outputs, and more likely to report issues to local, sub-county and district officials, as well as to the IG. In contrast, no impacts are found on the process used by communities to procure goods and materials. No impacts are found on payment made to district officials, satisfaction or trust in public officials. Beneficiaries report lower trust in community sub-project leaders, and slightly higher trust in the central government.

The social accountability training and scorecard intervention have positive impacts beyond NUSAF2. Some spill-overs from the community monitoring are also observed, as complaints from community members about government services others than NUSAF2 also increase.

**Policy Implications**

Overall, the impact evaluation shows that promoting social accountability can improve the quality of community projects and household welfare in large-scale decentralized development programs. However, not every type of intervention worked to improve household welfare. The combination of training and the scorecard information was key to achieve welfare improvements.

Lessons from implementation of the impact evaluation have already demonstrated policy influence. These lessons informed the design of NUSAF3 TAAC sub-component, where community monitoring groups have been given an expanded mandate. Given additional results showing the importance of combining training with scorecard interventions, the integration of scorecards may deserve additional attention. The TAAC sub-component provides an example on how to mainstream citizen engagement in large-scale operations and has been emulated in other social protection programs.