

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

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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.

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