BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: FOSTERING INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

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Glossary

Accountability

BBC Media Action defines accountability as the extent to which people, groups and institutions (principals) are able to hold government and other power holders (agents) responsible for their actions, and the extent to which government and other power holders provide a public account of their decisions and actions.

Regression

Regression analysis is a statistical technique that allows us to measure the association between variations in one or more independent variables and variation of a dependent one. In BBC Media Action's governance work, we usually use this technique to compare our audiences against those who do not listen to our programmes to see if there are any differences in these two groups in terms of their different levels of knowledge or tendency to participate more.

The advantage of regression is that it allows one to remove any distorting effects that might explain any differences between the groups. This process of removal is sometimes referred to as "controlling for confounders".

A confounder is a characteristic that is related both to the outcome we are interested in (such as knowledge or participation) as well as to what we think predicts this relationship (for example, exposure to our programmes). Confounders are variables that can be seen as preceding the intervention. In the analyses presented in this paper, these include demographic characteristics such as gender, education and age, as well as psychographic characteristics such as interest in politics.

Regression can only tell us whether there is a statistical association between someone being exposed to a programme and performing a particular behaviour. Regression analysis cannot tell us the direction of that relationship – for example, whether listening to the programme makes people perform the actual behaviour in question or whether performing that behaviour makes people listen to the programme. Regression analysis is not definitive proof of impact. Our particular regressions are predictive models only.

This study uses two types of analysis:

Bivariate analysis
Bivariate analysis examines the relationship between two variables (for example, exposure to governance programmes and participation) without taking into account the effect of other relevant variables. It offers the opportunity to establish the significance and strength of two-variable relationships in isolation.

Multivariate regression
Multivariate regression analysis quantifies the relationship between one dependent variable (for example, participation) and multiple independent variables (for example, exposure to governance programmes, interest in politics, age and income). This technique allows a more comprehensive model of the interaction between different variables, since it allows the testing of relationships between pairs of variables while controlling for other factors that potentially have an influence.

Voters listen to radio sets to monitor proceedings during the
2015 Nigerian presidential elections
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Executive summary

Increasing political participation is seen as one of the key routes to building accountability between citizens and leaders. Accountability is enhanced when citizens play an active role in making demands and when officials are expected to respond to those demands with satisfactory answers and actions.

BBC Media Action's governance programmes use media and communication to foster political participation. They do this by providing access to information, stimulating discussion and enabling people to interact directly with decision-makers. The organisation works with TV, radio, online and mobile platforms and produces a range of factual and entertainment formats including drama, debate programmes, magazine formats and public service announcements.

This research report examines the relationship between BBC Media Action's debate and discussion programmes and political participation, as well as the variables that contribute to this participation: political knowledge, discussion, and efficacy. To do this, the report draws on quantitative data collected from more than 23,000 respondents across seven African and Asian countries where BBC Media Action works.

The findings are clear and consistent across all seven countries: BBC Media Action's audiences participate more than people who do not listen to and/or watch its programmes, even when taking other influencing factors – such as age, income and interest in politics – into account. There is also a strong, positive association between exposure to BBC Media Action programmes and political knowledge and discussion.

But political participation plays out differently among different groups in this dataset. Exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is positively related to higher political participation among younger and less educated audiences. This interaction effect is different for gender: BBC Media Action's female audience members participate in politics more than women who are not exposed to its programmes. But the increase in political participation demonstrated by male audience members is greater.

These findings have important implications for the relationship between media and governance. If those who tend to participate less overall in politics – such as younger and less educated groups – gain more by watching or listening to BBC Media Action media outputs, then this suggests that discussion and debate formats can potentially be a powerful tool for social inclusion. Indeed, there may be an argument for targeting this sort of programme specifically at such marginalised groups is order to make their voices heard. But these results also suggest that media programming can reinforce gender imbalances in the way in which men and women participate in politics.

When combined, the consistent results amassed in this multi-country sample, together with insights from detailed local research carried out previously by BBC Media Action, offer a much more comprehensive view of the role that media can play in encouraging political participation. By analysing data on a topic that has been historically under-studied in the developing world, BBC Media Action is helping to build a more comprehensive evidence base. The report concludes by suggesting future directions for research around media's relationship to social norms, gender and other aspects of accountability, both across and within the countries where we work.

Introduction

"Participation of the governed in their government is, in theory, the cornerstone of democracy."[1]

Increasing citizens' political participation is widely understood to be one way of closing the gap between citizens and the institutions of government. By ensuring continuous inclusion in decision-making processes, participation can shift the status of citizens from passive beneficiaries of development to its "rightful and legitimate claimants".[2] These deep and continuous forms of political participation embody the direct democratic oversight that defines a functioning accountability relationship.[3]

There is a wealth of literature showing how mass media, particularly news media, has an impact on assorted "drivers" of political participation, including individuals' political knowledge, interpersonal political discussion and political efficacy.[4] To date, however, most of that literature has examined these relationships in the advanced, developed democracies of the West.

This paper, in contrast, looks at the relationship between media, political participation and its assorted drivers in the developing world. To do this, it draws on quantitative data from more than 23,000 respondents in seven African and Asian countries, where BBC Media Action broadcasts debate and discussion programmes focused on governance and rights.

This paper's findings are remarkably consistent across the seven countries. In brief, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming is positively associated with political participation: BBC Media Action's audience members participate more than people who do not listen to and/or watch its programmes, even when taking other influencing factors into account. There is also a strong, positive association between exposure to BBC Media Action programmes and political knowledge and discussion. That these findings are so consistent across this multi-country dataset – despite marked differences in the format, objectives and local context of BBC Media Action programming – is striking.

Equally striking is the way in which political participation plays out across different groups in this dataset. In particular, of people who are young, less educated and less interested in politics, those who have watched or listened to BBC Media Action governance programmes demonstrate a stronger association with political participation than those who have not. This suggests that exposure to governance programmes can have a "compensating effect" on the political participation of groups who have traditionally been less engaged in politics.

This interaction effect is different for gender. BBC Media Action's female audience members participate in politics more than women who are not exposed to its programmes. But there is an even greater increase in political participation demonstrated male audience members, reinforcing the difference in initial participation levels between genders.

This paper makes an important contribution to the growing evidence base on the role of media in the developing world. First, it establishes that media has an important relationship with political

participation. Specifically, inclusive discussion programmes – where a diverse audience is engaged in fair and balanced debate – can increase political participation, even among traditionally marginalised groups. But this type of media programming can also reinforce imbalances in the way in which men and women participate in politics. Finally, this research also underscores the importance of combining cross-national research with in-depth local studies, to better understand the relative weight of assorted drivers of political participation.

The paper unfolds as follows. Part 1 briefly reviews the literature on media, participation and accountability, a historically under-studied topic in the developing world. Part 2 outlines the research methodology used for this paper. Part 3 presents the results. Part 4 discusses some key findings and their implications for accountability. Part 5 concludes with some thoughts on potential future research.

Part 1
Participation, accountability and the media

Defining accountability: the role of political participation

Development practitioners focusing on supporting accountability have traditionally used two approaches to overcome the distance between rulers and the ruled: a bottom-up strategy that strengthens individual participation and a top-down mechanism that strengthens state responsiveness. The second of these two approaches occurs when individuals, groups or institutions have the capacity to hold government and other power holders responsible for their actions and authorities must, in turn, justify their decisions publicly. This formal, procedural accountability is sometimes defined as "answerability".[5]

"Participation is not something that can be done to people but must stem from people themselves."

Participation, in contrast, can be seen as tangible expression of individual and collective empowerment. It can occur directly – such as when citizens question their leaders or vote them into office – or it can take place through more indirect pathways, including signing petitions, joining demonstrations or getting involved in local decision-making processes. But empowerment involves more than simply providing beneficiaries with the information and skills to participate in a given political system. Adopting the conceptual model of accountability proposed by Lindberg, empowered citizens feel they have the right, the opportunity and a mechanism through which to make their demands known to those in authority through open, participatory "spaces" and are satisfied with the response that they receive.[6] Seen through this light, participation is not something that can be done to people but must stem from people themselves.

While development interventions often focus on one of these two approaches, it is important to recognise that neither is sufficient on its own. As Gaventa notes, focusing on individual participation without increasing opportunities for access can lead to "voice without influence", while strengthening the formal responsiveness of institutions without considering how they become more inclusive can simply help to maintain the status quo.[7]

This paper is concerned primarily with the first part of the accountability equation: political participation. Since the 1990s increasing political participation has been a common aim for governance support projects in the international development community.[8] These have ranged from participatory budgeting to public expenditure tracking, citizen monitoring and evaluation of public services.

In contrast, this paper is interested in the role of media – and specifically, broadcast media – as a vehicle for political participation. Broadcast media provides a platform from which people of every part of society can potentially influence the decisions that affect their lives. This participation can act as a demonstration effect, leading to increased participation in other forums – whether private (with family and friends) or public (in a "town hall meeting" or a collective endeavour).[9] The next section reviews what the literature has had to say about the relationship between mass media and participation. The paper returns to the answerability question in Part 4.

Political participation: where does media fit in?

A number of studies demonstrate that exposure to mass media, generally understood as news media, is positively associated with different forms of political participation, from interpersonal discussion and interest in political affairs to voting and protest.[10] Both reading newspapers and regularly viewing TV news have been positively associated with attendance and participation at public deliberative fora such as local meetings. More generally, positive correlations have been observed between media freedom within countries and various aspects of political participation, including voter turnout, signing petitions or attending demonstrations.[11]

There is also a wealth of literature showing how mass media, particularly news media, has an impact on assorted drivers of participation.[12] Take knowledge. Mass media plays an important role in providing information on, and increasing understanding of, political issues – at least in advanced industrial democracies. Increased access to political information has, in turn, been shown to increase political knowledge as well as politicians' responsiveness to citizens' needs.[13]

Discussion is also an important driver of political participation. In common with other studies, Jung et al.'s (2011) cross-sectional study on news exposure and political participation found that interpersonal discussion largely mediates the effects of news media on political outcomes.[14] While this research did not claim causality, the authors inferred causality through the use of structural equation modelling and comparison with alternative models and theories. Scheufele (2002) also found that the relationship between TV news exposure and political

participation was stronger for participants who discussed politics frequently with others than for those who did not.[15] Explaining this phenomenon, Scheufele stated that "interpersonal discussion plays a role in the reception and processing of political news when it comes to translating mass mediated messages into meaningful action".[16]

"While the evidence cited above supports claims that mass media can play a role in fostering increased political participation, it is drawn largely from 'mature' democracies in developed countries."

Political efficacy is another variable that is frequently studied in conjunction with political participation.[17] Political efficacy can be defined as "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process". It is commonly understood to comprise two components – an internal measure that corresponds to an individual's belief in their own ability to engage in, and exert influence on, the political process, and an external measure that constitutes the individual's belief that government institutions are responsive to citizens' demands.[18] However, research into this factor is relatively underdeveloped compared with knowledge and discussion, and there is little agreement on valid measures of political efficacy. Studies have not come up with universally reliable scales using both internal and external efficacy.[19] Consequently, some have tended to use a single-item measure to capture this variable, such as whether individuals feel they could do as good a job as most other people as a member of parliament or local councillor.[20]

While the evidence cited above supports claims that mass media can play a role in fostering increased political participation, this literature is drawn largely from "mature" democracies in developed countries. As such, these findings will not necessarily hold in fledgling democracies in fragile environments, such as Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria or Myanmar – where BBC Media Action governance programmes are broadcast. Moreover, studies that have looked specifically at media's impact in more fragile democratic contexts have focused largely on changes in attitudes (towards tolerance of opposing views, for example)[21] and social norms (for instance, around violence against women[22] or deference to authority),[23] rather than explicitly on political participation or its drivers. While this body of work provides a high standard of experimental evidence, it does not directly cover the role that mass media plays in encouraging and supporting political participation on a large scale.

BBC Media Action believes that media can influence accountability at three levels:

- Empowering people: providing trusted, accurate and balanced information, stimulating discussion and challenging restrictive norms

so that people from every section of society can participate effectively in the decisions that are important to them

- Creating space: supporting more inclusive public discussion on the issues that matter to all sections of society
- Influencing power: exposing those in power to views from across society, requiring them to explain and answer for their actions, increasing transparency and improving their responsiveness[24]

Our research contributes to all three aspects listed above, primarily focused on people's perceptions. The next section of this paper briefly reviews that work.

BBC Media Action governance programming

BBC Media Action governance programming uses media and communication to provide access to information, stimulate discussion and create platforms that enable people to interact directly with decision-makers. The organisation works with TV, radio, online and mobile platforms and produces a range of factual and entertainment formats including drama, debate programmes, magazine formats and public service announcements.

While the overall objective of BBC Media Action governance programming is to support more accountable, peaceful and inclusive states and societies, the principal focus to date has been building communication capacities to contribute to more accountable state–society relations.

The theory is that by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and confidence to participate in public life, media can empower citizens to hold their governments accountable and, ultimately, sanction their leaders for any wrongdoing. Indeed, much of BBC Media Action's programming is aimed at enabling ordinary people to question power holders in a mass media forum that demands direct answers in front of a national audience.

Case study: Sajha Sawal

The Nepali radio and TV political discussion show *Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions) was first broadcast in 2007 and has since become the country's most popular current affairs programme, with a reach of 6.3 million people. Every week, *Sajha Sawal* brings together a panel of politicians and other decision-makers and a live audience, carefully chosen to represent a broad cross-section of society. *Sajha Sawal* aims to provide a platform for people from all walks of life, including some of the most marginalised demographics in Nepal, to express their views about the issues that matter to them and to hold government officials and political leaders to account. Since its launch, more than 30,000 people have been part of the studio audience, asking tough questions of a panel of politicians and decision-makers, local officials and experts.

Sajha Sawal has addressed a diverse range of topics over the course of the programme, including:

- Nepal's first woman president (Bidhya Bhandari)
- Agricultural development
- Migrant workers
- Women and their hopes for the future
- The Terai and Madhesh movement[25]
- The energy crisis and hydropower developments
- Reconstruction following the April 2015 earthquake

More information on *Sajha Sawal* and BBC Media Action governance programmes in other countries is available at: www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/what-we-do/governance-and-rights

BBC Media Action governance research

BBC Media Action has studied the relationship between mass media and political participation in relation to accountability, but always within the individual countries where it works (see box on BBC Media Action governance programming). In Sierra Leone, for example, BBC Media Action research found that regular listeners of its twice-monthly debate programme were more likely to report higher levels of knowledge of key governance issues and more frequent political participation than non-listeners.[26] In Nepal, listening to BBC Media Action's debate programme was also significantly associated with an increase in political participation: the greater an individual's exposure to the programme, the higher their level of political participation and discussion.[27]

Using structural equation modelling (SEM), BBC Media Action research in Kenya has allowed further exploration of the pathways between exposure to its debate programme *Sema Kenya* (Kenya Speaks) and drivers of political participation such as knowledge, discussion and efficacy. The validated model demonstrates that political participation is linked to exposure to *Sema Kenya* but the relationship is indirect, through the knock-on effects of these other governance drivers.[28] None of these previous studies were randomised control trials, and as such they do not provide evidence that listening to governance programming caused the observed effects. However, the results of all three studies give some indication that audiences who have listened to BBC Media Action programmes demonstrate greater knowledge and more frequent political participation than their peers who have not listened.

"In seeking to ascertain if, and how, nationally broadcast debate and discussion programmes can help to foster greater political participation, the report hopes to bolster the small but growing evidence base around media and participation in developing countries."

While the results across individual countries have built a consistent picture of impact, this paper goes a step further. By drawing on a multi-country database collected from seven large-scale, cross-national surveys, this paper examines the cross-country effects of exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming in a cross-section of developing countries from Africa and Asia for the very first time. In seeking to ascertain if, and how, nationally broadcast debate and discussion programmes can help to foster greater political participation, the report hopes to bolster the small but growing evidence base around media and participation in developing countries.

BBC Media Action governance programming: audience

The study underpinning this paper employed a combined dataset using the most recent data collected from each of seven countries: Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. This allowed researchers to examine the overall audience characteristics.

Across all countries, BBC Media Action governance programming reaches 21% of the adult population, with 16% regularly reached. This audience is disproportionately male: 37.6% female, 62.4% male (overall population: 48.7% female, 51.3% male). The audience split across rural and urban settings is identical to that of the overall population. The majority of audience members live in rural areas: 36.9% urban, 63.1% rural (overall population: 36.9% urban, 63.1% rural).

The audience is broadly representative of overall population age (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Audience profile (age)

Legend: Population, Audience

Age	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+
Audience	30%	29%	18%	11%	7%	4%
Population	27%	31%	19%	13%	7%	3%
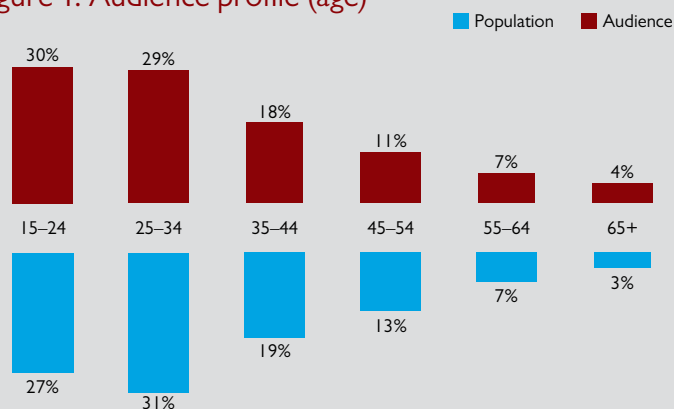
The audience is fairly representative of income status in the countries under review, with a few more audience members drawn from the wealthiest segments of the population and slightly fewer from the middle-income segment than in the population at large (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Audience profile (income)

Legend: Population, Audience

Income	Population	Audience
Low income	21%	21%
Medium income	69%	65%
High income	10%	14%
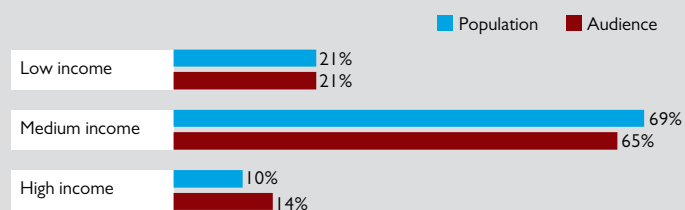
Part 2
Research design

This section lays out the central hypothesis in this paper, operationalises the explanatory and outcome variables, and describes the research methodology.

Hypothesis

The main hypothesis that this paper seeks to test is that exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming is associated with increased political participation. In addition, the paper also explores whether exposure to governance programmes is associated with the drivers of participation: knowledge, discussion and political efficacy.

Although these variables are recognised as influencing political participation, the authors acknowledge that the relationship could work in the opposite direction – more participation could also lead to increased discussion, knowledge and efficacy. So while, in keeping with the literature, the model used here works on the assumption that these elements influence political participation, it is important to bear in mind that this analysis does not assign causality to this relationship. The causal nature of these relationships can only be established in a controlled experimental setting, something this research was not designed to do.

Data

The dataset used in this analysis consisted of cross-sectional data from seven countries.[29] All data was collected through primary research carried out by BBC Media Action in these countries. The total sample size was 23,621, with data collected at various points over the course of the five-year programme.[30] Where multiple phases of data collection were carried out, only the most recent single dataset from each country was incorporated into the composite dataset. There was therefore no over-time analysis conducted with this data (see Table 1).

Table 1: Country survey dates

Country	Data collection
Bangladesh	July 2015
Myanmar	August 2013
Nepal	January 2016
Kenya	January 2015
Nigeria	December 2014
Sierra Leone	July 2013
Tanzania	August 2013

Researchers used standardised questions concerning common governance measures across the countries to develop a common dataset for analysis. These questions covered a variety of characteristics, behaviours and attitudes that could be compared across all seven countries.

Independent variable: exposure

Exposure is a binary variable used to identify members of BBC Media Action's audience. It allows comparison of two distinct groups: people exposed to BBC Media Action governance programmes and people not exposed.

In this analysis, exposure to BBC Media Action programming is defined as having regularly listened or watched at least one of its governance programmes in the last 12 months. "Regular" consumers are those who listen to, or watch, at least alternate episodes of the programme.[31]

Dependent variables

This paper's analysis investigates the links between exposure and four dependent variables: political participation, interpersonal political discussion, political knowledge and political efficacy. These composite indices are all constructed from a series of individual survey questions, as set out below.[32] A composite score was calculated based on the combined answers used in the construct. This score was then standardised on a scale of 0–10 to facilitate interpretation and comparison.

The analysis was based on a participation index on a scale of 0–10, based on a combination of number and frequency of reported political activities. A score of zero indicates no participation in any of the activities in the participation index, whereas a score of 10 indicates having engaged in all six specific activities multiple times, alongside intending to vote at both local and national levels.

Similarly, researchers developed a discussion index on a scale of 0–10, based on how frequently and with whom an individual reported

discussing politics. A score of zero indicates never discussing politics with anyone, whereas a score of 10 indicates frequent discussion with family, friends and people outside these two groups.

Knowledge survey questions

We're now going to talk about some issues that people like you have said are important in [country] today.

1. Please say how much, if anything, you know about the current situation with these issues.

Do you know a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or nothing at all?

2. And how much, if anything, do you feel you know about the background/causes of these issues?

Do you know a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or nothing at all?

The knowledge index (also scored from 0–10) was based on respondents' perceived level of knowledge of four governance issues specific to their respective countries. Although these issues are not directly comparable across countries, they reflect topics on which anyone with some interest and access to news media was likely to have some basic knowledge. These include subjects such as constitutional changes, corruption in government, foreign investment and citizens' rights.[34]

A score of zero indicates no knowledge of any specific issue, while 10 reflects high self-reported levels of knowledge on all four governance issues.

Efficacy survey questions

Please say whether you agree or disagree with the following.

1. People like me are entitled to question government officials about their decisions and actions
2. There are ways for people like me to question government officials on their decisions and actions
3. I am satisfied with the account that government officials currently give of their decisions and actions
4. When people get together to demand change, the leaders in government listen
5. The national government in [country] acts on the needs of ordinary people

Efficacy was measured using a number of different items including the five questions outlined above. Researchers tested several combinations of questions that could describe efficacy using factor analysis. The above five-question construct was deemed the best "fit" based on the multi-country dataset (see discussion in Part 4 and also Technical appendix). Researchers devised an efficacy index on a scale of 0–10, where zero indicates no agreement with any of the efficacy statements and 10 indicates strong agreement with all of them.

Confounding variables

The analysis incorporated a number of additional variables to control for factors known to have an influence on political participation. These include demographic elements such as:

- Gender
- Age
- Location (urban/rural)
- Literacy/education level
- Income
- Marital status

Analysis found that all of these characteristics were associated with how likely a respondent is to watch or listen to a BBC Media Action programme about governance.[35] Controlling for these factors increased the confidence that exposure to BBC Media Action programmes is related to political participation, knowledge, discussion and efficacy.

This study also controlled for socio-political factors, including:

- Interest in politics
- Group activity

In considering individuals' interest in politics and active membership of a group, researchers controlled for two attributes that are commonly seen to influence people's levels of political knowledge and activity. Interest in politics is a self-reported measure of general interest in politics, whereas group activity indicates whether an individual is a member of a political, religious or other voluntary group focused on public service, and how active they are in that group. Although this variable could be considered similar to political participation, this paper conceptualises group activity as a measure of long-term, consistent engagement with a social or political group, whereas the political participation measure describes a set of one-off activities (see Figure 6, page 29).

Arguably, neither of these socio-political characteristics is exclusively a pre-existing condition. Interest in politics, in particular, could also be influenced by exposure to governance programming. This study treats

these confounders as pre-existing influences, rather than behaviours affected by exposure. This is because, on balance, they are more likely to be persistent, pre-existing characteristics that influence whether a person watches or listens to BBC Media Action programmes in the first place, rather than an outcome of that activity. Moreover, the survey asked about interest in politics without reference to media consumption.

Since data was gathered across seven different countries, analysis also included a "country" variable to control for factors directly related to the respondents' country of residence (such as linguistic and cultural particularities) or differences between the national programmes themselves. This study presents results from country-level analysis in the Technical appendix. At this stage, the analysis included the country variable in the regression models simply as a control. Sierra Leone was considered as the reference category merely because it is the country with the largest number of respondents (4,390).

List of confounding variables and their categories

Variable name: Country
Categories: Sierra Leone; Bangladesh; Nepal; Kenya; Nigeria; Tanzania; Myanmar

Variable name: Gender
Categories: Male; Female

Variable name: Age
Categories: 15–24; 25–34; 35–44; 45–54; 55–64; 65+

Variable name: Location
Categories: Rural; Urban

Variable name: Education level
Categories: Illiterate;[36] Literate but no schooling; Primary education completed; Secondary education completed; Higher (college or university) education completed

Variable name: Income
Categories: Low; Medium;[37] High

Variable name: Marital status
Categories: Married, living with spouse; Single; Married, not living with spouse; Divorced/separated; Widowed; In a marriage where the husband has more than one wife; Living with partner

Variable name: Interest in politics
Categories: Not interested at all; Not very interested; Somewhat interested; Very interested

Variable name: Group activity
Categories: Not an active member in any group; Active member in at least one group

Analysis

Data analysis for all dependent variables followed the same procedure. This consisted of three distinct stages, as outlined below.

Analysis stage 1: bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis is used to establish the relationship between two variables. This type of analysis allows researchers to calculate both the significance and strength of the correlation – in this case, between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and political participation. It does not, however, take any other confounding factors into account – it simply describes the correlation between two variables.

Bivariate analysis was initially conducted to assess the relationship between pairs of variables. Specifically, this checked for the direction, strength and significance of the relationships between the independent variable (exposure) and the dependent variables: participation, discussion, knowledge and efficacy.

Since the dependent variables are scale variables and exposure is a binary one (where 0 indicates people who are not exposed and 1 people who are regularly reached by one or more BBC Media Action governance programmes), researchers conducted T-tests for independent samples to test the significance of the difference between the exposed and the unexposed groups' means, with significance level at 0.01.[38]

Similarly, bivariate analysis was used to test the association among the different dependent variables. Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed for all associations between scale variables (significance tests were one-tailed with $\alpha = 0.01$).

Researchers also checked the association between each confounding variable and each dependent variable (exposure, participation, knowledge and discussion). This was done to ascertain whether the confounders were genuine confounders, in other words, that they were associated with both the independent variable (exposure) and the assorted dependent variables in the different multivariate analytical models.[39]

Analysis stage 2: multivariate regression analysis

Researchers built ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models to measure the association between exposure and the dependent variables (participation, discussion, knowledge and efficacy) while controlling for several potentially intervening factors, described above as confounding variables.

Therefore, each regression model included exposure as the main independent variable (or predictor) and the full list of demographic and socio-political confounders outlined above.

Researchers developed four different models in total, looking at the four different outcomes.

Categorical and ordinal variables have been recorded as dummy variables to incorporate them in the models. The reference category for each categorical variable was the category with the highest number of observations, while for ordinal variables – such as interest in politics, age, education and income – researchers defined the lowest level as the reference category.[40]

Researchers applied the four models to the dataset covering all seven countries under review. After the cross-country analysis of the 23,000 individual observations, researchers performed separate within-country analyses, replicating all of the four models for each of the seven countries.

Analysis stage 3: interaction effects

This study also included interaction effects between the main predictor (exposure) and the confounding variables in our OLS regression models. This attempted to identify variables that act as moderators between the independent variable exposure and the dependent variables (participation, discussion, knowledge and efficacy), affecting the strength and/or the direction of the relationship. An interaction effect that significantly affects this relationship means that the association between exposure and the dependent variable varies according to the level of another variable (the moderator). A typical example is gender: for men and women, exposure may be differently associated with participation (or other dependent variables).

Researchers checked for all possible interactions between exposure and both demographic and socio-political confounding variables. Where significant at the 0.01 level, they included the interaction effects in a new version of the OLS regression models, which included all of the significant interaction effects between exposure and the confounding variables.[41]

This section describes the findings of the regression analysis used to address the overall research hypotheses:

a. That exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is associated with higher political participation
b. That exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is associated with higher levels of the drivers of political participation: knowledge, discussion and efficacy

Figure 3 shows the conceptual relationship between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and political participation.

Figure 3: Model of exposure to governance programmes
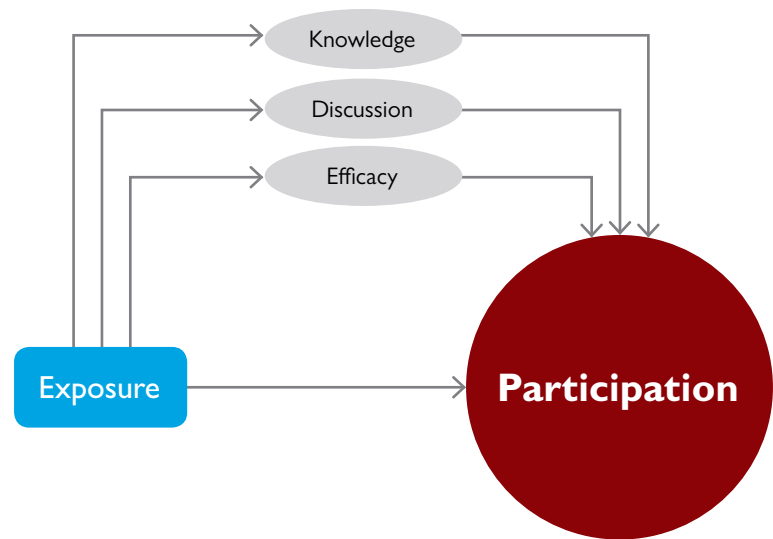
Part 3
Findings

Summary

Political participation

1. Overall, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is positively associated with political participation.
2. Exposure is more strongly associated with higher participation for younger and less educated people and for those with less interest in politics. Exposure to BBC Media Action programming, then, appears to have a compensation effect for these groups.
3. BBC Media Action's female audience members participate in politics more than women who are not exposed to its programmes. But the increase in political participation demonstrated by BBC Media Action's male audience is greater, reinforcing the difference in initial participation levels between genders.

Political knowledge

1. Exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is positively associated with political knowledge.
2. Political knowledge is also positively associated with age, group activity, level of education and – most strongly – interest in politics.
3. Exposure is more strongly associated with higher self-reported political knowledge for younger, less educated, less politically interested and poorer people. Exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming appears to have a compensation effect on political knowledge for these groups.

Political discussion

1. Exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is positively associated with increased political discussion.
2. Political discussion is also positively associated with interest in politics, age, education level and being active in one or more political, religious or other voluntary groups. The average frequency of political discussion is higher among men than women.
3. Exposure is more strongly associated with more frequent political discussion for less educated people and those who are less interested in politics. Exposure appears to have a compensation effect on the frequency of political discussion for these two groups.

Part 3a: Political participation

This section explores the associations between watching or listening to BBC Media Action governance programmes and political participation. Using data from the combined dataset (as described in Part 2), researchers used a series of regression analyses to identify the significant associations (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Exposure and participation
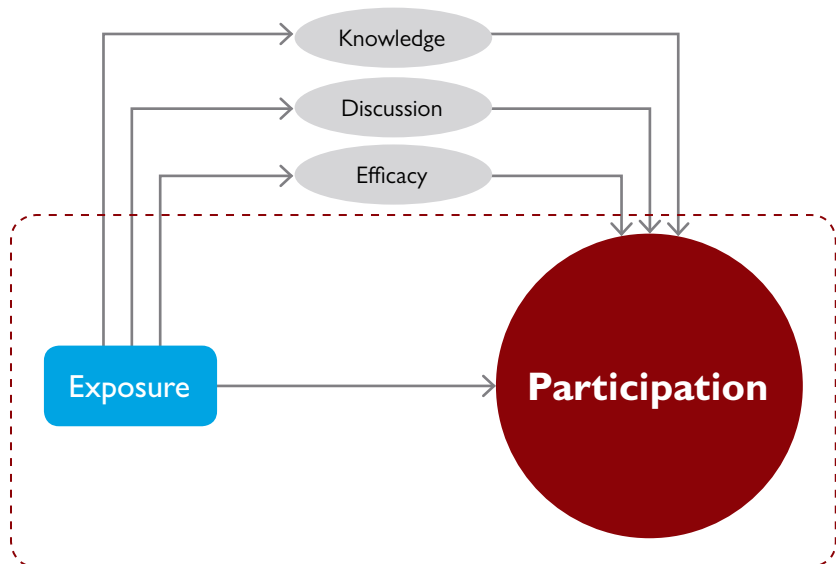
Media and participation at a glance

Looking at individual elements in the participation scale (eg attending a local council meeting and intention to vote) highlights a consistent and statistically significant increase in the proportion of exposed respondents participating across all eight types of participation (see Figures 5 and 6). While this analysis is descriptive and does not control for the influence of potentially confounding variables (such as demographics and socio-political characteristics), it is clear, for example, that:

- 42% of people regularly reached by BBC Media Action governance programming have participated in an organised effort to solve a problem several times, whereas only 26% of those not reached by these programmes have done so
- 54% of people regularly reached by BBC Media Action governance programming have attended a local council meeting at least once, compared with 35% of those not reached by these programmes
- 40% of people regularly reached by BBC Media Action governance programming have contacted a local official one or more times, whereas only 28% of those not reached by these programmes have done so

Figure 5: Participation in individual political actions (all countries combined)

Legend: ■ Once ■ Several times

Categories (each with Non-viewer/listener and Regular viewer/listener bars):
- Participated in an organised effort
- Attended a meeting of the local town council
- Contacted a local official
- Contacted a national elected official
- Contacted a local chief or traditional leader
- Taken part in a protest, march or demonstration
- Attended a town hall meeting*

*Only includes data from Nigeria

Figure 6: Intention to vote
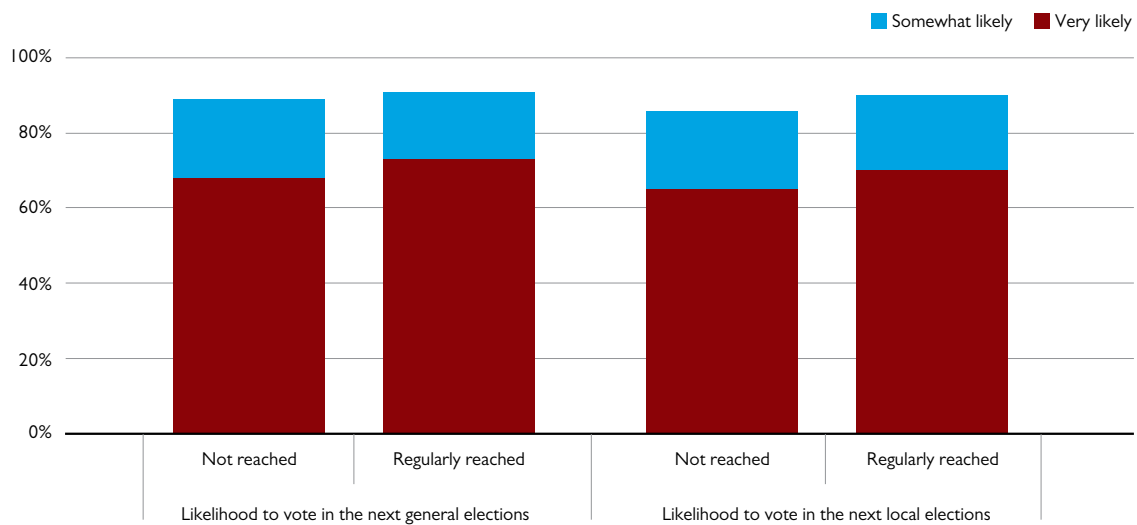
Legend: ■ Somewhat likely ■ Very likely

	Likelihood to vote in the next general elections		Likelihood to vote in the next local elections	
	Not reached	Regularly reached	Not reached	Regularly reached

Bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis shows that exposure to BBC Media Action programming is significantly associated with a higher level of political participation. People regularly reached by BBC Media Action governance programmes have, on average, a score of 4.53 on a participation scale of 0–10, while 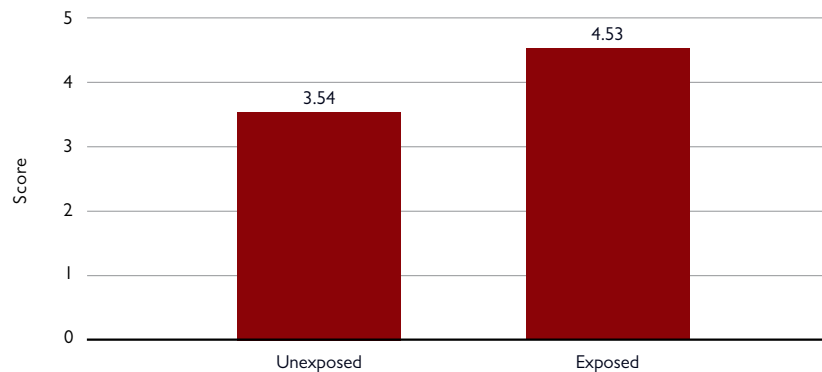unexposed people only have a score of 3.54 (see Figure 7). As the T-test shows, this difference of 0.99 is significant at 0.001 level.[42]

Figure 7: Mean participation score for exposed and unexposed groups

At the bivariate level, political participation is also associated with:

- **Gender** – Men's participation score is on average 4.16; women's is 3.27. This difference of 0.89 is significant with $\alpha = 0.001$.[43]
- **Location** – People living in rural areas have, on average, a participation score of 3.79, while people living in urban areas have an average score of 3.58. This difference of 0.21 is significant at 0.001 level.[44]
- **Age** – Political participation tends to increase with age. Younger people (aged 15–34) tend to participate less, middle-aged groups (aged 35–54) participate an average amount and participation is high for all the older categories.[45]
- **Education** – Political participation increases slightly with basic levels of education; it strongly increases with higher education.[46]
- **Income** – Political participation is significantly higher for people with low incomes. People with high incomes participate more, but not significantly so.[47]
- **Marital status** – Single people participate in politics less than others. People who are married, whether or not they live with their spouse, and particularly those in a marriage where the husband has more than one wife, participate more.[48]
- **Interest in politics** – Political participation increases with interest in politics.[49]
- **Membership in groups** – Active group members' participation score is 4.28 on average, which is 1.22 points higher than non-members' average participation score. This difference is significant at 0.001 level.[50]

Multivariate analysis

As the bivariate analysis demonstrates, people who are regularly reached by BBC Media Action governance programmes participate more in politics. Further analysis at the multivariate level confirms this finding when other potentially intervening factors (such as demographic characteristics or socio-political confounders) are constant[51] (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Exposure and the drivers of participation, with confounding factors
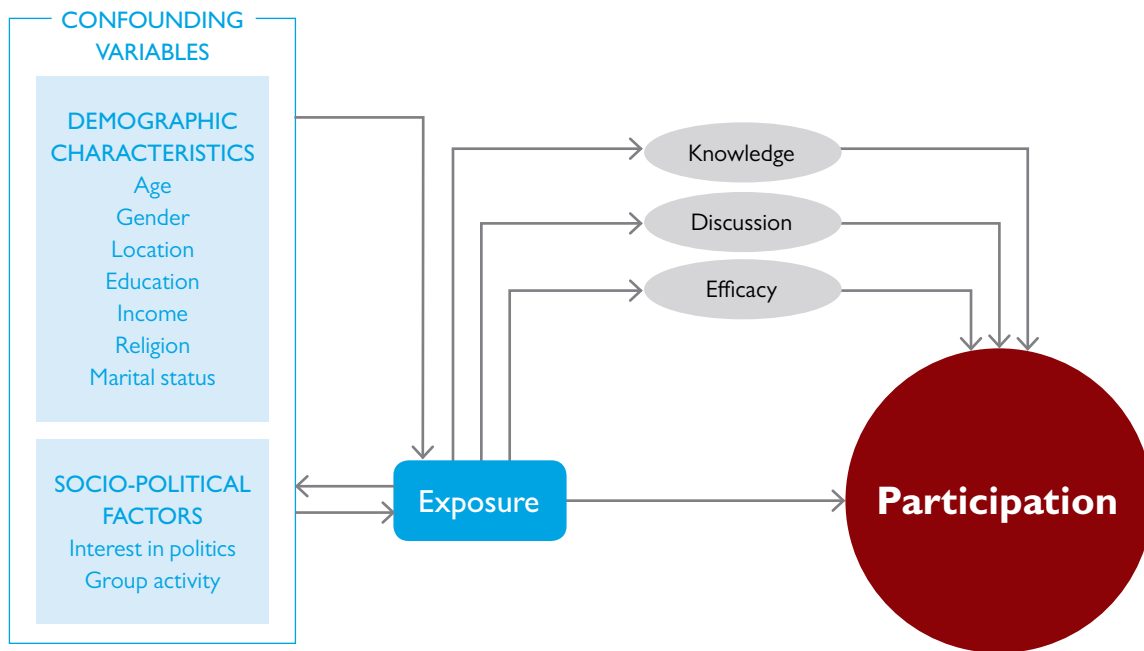
Multivariate regression models show a significant positive association between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes and political participation (see Table 2). The regression coefficient for exposure is 0.53, which means that, keeping constant all other conditions in the model, people exposed to BBC Media Action governance programming report a participation score that is (on average) 0.53 higher than that of unexposed respondents. In other words, on a participation index of 0–10, BBC Media Action audiences report that their political participation is 0.53 higher than that of people who have not watched or listened to BBC Media Action shows.

Table 2: Multivariate regression model for participation (on a 0–10 scale)

Variables	B	St. err. B	β
Exposure (compared with not exposed)			
Exposure to at least one governance programme	.530***	.035	.100
Interest in politics (compared with not interested at all)			
Not very interested	.264***	.043	.054
Somewhat interested	.687***	.042	.156
Very interested	1.267***	.045	.272
Group activity (compared with not active at all)			
Active in a group	.804***	.031	.192
Gender (compared with men)			
Women	-.550***	.027	-.132
Age (compared with age group 15–24)			
25–34	.400***	.037	.087
35–44	.577***	.045	.106
45–54	.821***	.051	.126
55–64	.938***	.061	.114
65+	1.026***	.071	.105
Education (compared with illiterate)			
Literate	.217***	.049	.035
Completed primary education	.411***	.046	.081
Completed secondary education	.440***	.045	.099
Completed college or university	.792***	.053	.137
Country (compared with Sierra Leone)			
Bangladesh	-.567***	.056	-.086
Nepal	-1.204***	.049	-.216
Kenya	.043	.049	.007
Nigeria	-.981***	.046	-.180
Tanzania	-1.033***	.048	-.188
Myanmar	-.532***	.070	-.056
Location (compared with rural)			
Urban	-.254	.030	-.058
Income (compared with medium level)			
Low	.195***	.034	.040
High	-.011	.048	-.002
Marital status (compared with married, living with spouse)			
Single	-.482***	.037	-.107
Married, not living with spouse	-.073	.063	-.007
Divorced/separated	-.182	.097	-.012
Widowed	-.097	.069	-.009
In a marriage where the husband has more than one wife	.735***	.134	.034
Living with partner	.035	.151	.001
Constant	2.828***	.071	
Adjusted R square	.288		
N	23,621		

* = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$

Control variables

As noted in Part 3, levels of education and interest in politics are often strong predictors of political participation and present useful comparisons for interpreting these headline findings. The regression model in Table 2 shows that people with the highest level of education (college or university degree) score 0.79 higher on the participation index than those who are not literate. In addition, people with a high interest in politics report a score 1.267 higher on the participation index than those with no interest in politics. Given the strength of the association between these variables and political participation, the 0.53 increase in participation associated with exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is substantial (see Table 2).

Interaction effects

Examining interaction effects allows exploration of combinations of variables and their associations with political participation. From there, research can start to identify factors that, in combination, strengthen the association with exposure and those that weaken this link. A difference in the strength of the association could either reinforce an already existing difference in levels of political participation, or could act to compensate for the difference between different demographic or socio-political groups.

The interactions that proved to be significant at the 0.01 level are exposure with:[52]

- Gender
- Age
- Education
- Group activity
- Interest in politics[53]

Compensation effects: interest in politics, age, education

This paper has described the effect of combining two factors on the strength of the association with political participation, and noted that it could either increase or decrease the difference in participation between different demographic or socio-political groups. It uses the term "compensation" to describe the effect of the combination of factors reducing an existing difference in levels of political participation. Several demographic and socio-political characteristics combine with exposure to governance programmes to produce this effect.

Interest in politics

This study's bivariate analysis shows that political participation is positively associated with several demographic and socio-political characteristics.

Among these, interest in politics plays a major role. In addition, the first multivariate regression model shows that the factor with the strongest relationship to participation is "interest in politics", which has a positive

association (represented by the B coefficient) of 1.267 for respondents very interested in politics, compared with those with no interest at all (see Table 2).

However, looking at interest in politics in combination with exposure demonstrates a stronger relationship with political participation for respondents with no interest in politics, an effect that becomes weaker for those with higher levels of interest. This suggests that because people with no interest in politics participate less in politics to begin with, exposure to governance programming seems to have a compensating effect. This narrows the "gap" in levels of political participation between people with no interest in politics and those with a higher interest.

Figure 9: Compensation effect
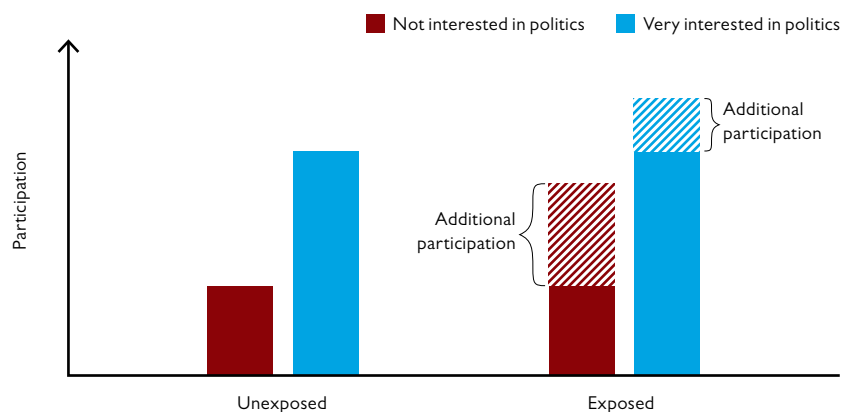
Age
As noted earlier, both bivariate and multivariate analysis shows that political participation increases with age.

However, exposure among younger groups (and, particularly, for the youngest group, aged 15–24) has a stronger association with participation than it does in older groups, reducing the difference between the level of participation of young and old. Once again, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes seems to have a compensation effect on age.

Education
A similar pattern applies to education. The relationship between exposure and political participation is the strongest for the non-literate group. It is significantly weaker, though still positive, for respondents with higher levels of education. Exposure again represents a form of compensation, since both bivariate analysis and multivariate regression shows that each education category is significantly associated with higher levels of participation when compared with the non-literate reference category.

Reinforcement effects: gender and group activity
As seen in the bivariate analysis and the first regression model (see Table 2), exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes

has a strong positive association with political participation. This is true for both men and women. However, the strength of this positive association is also larger for men than for women. As previously noted, bivariate analysis in this paper demonstrates that, in general, men participate more in politics than women (4.16 for men, on average, as opposed to 3.27 for women).

Multivariate regression models also show that women have a lower level of political participation than men. Therefore, given that average levels of participation for men are higher than for women, the interaction effect between gender and exposure to governance programming reinforces the difference between the two groups. This widens the average difference in political participation between men and women to larger than it is in the unexposed group.

A very similar reinforcement effect applies to group activity. Both bivariate analysis and multivariate regression demonstrates that people who are active members of a voluntary group have a higher political participation score than those who are not active in any group (at bivariate level, this difference was 1.22 on a 0–10 scale). The interaction effect between group activity and exposure to governance programmes indicates that this difference is even wider for exposed people. The positive association of exposure to political participation is indeed stronger in the case of active group members, thus reinforcing a pre-existing gap in participation between these two groups.

Figure 10: Drivers of political participation
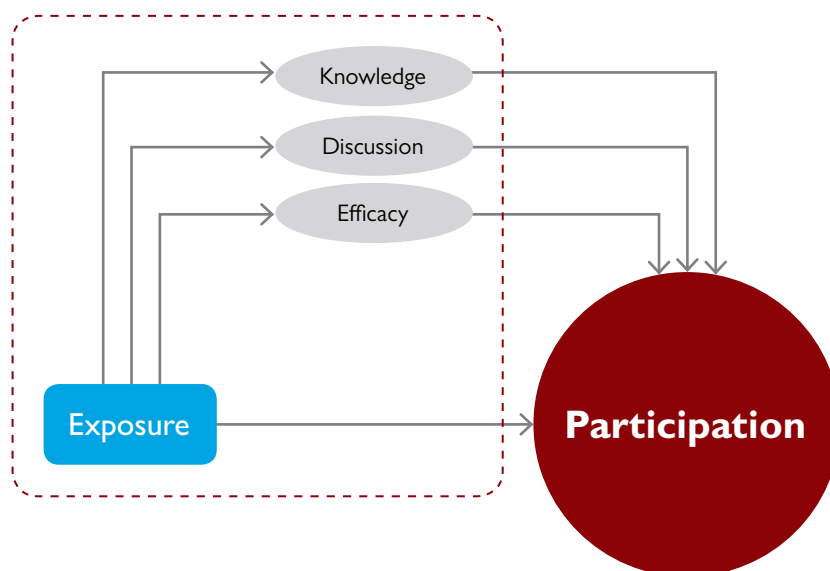
Part 3b: Knowledge

This section highlights findings relating to the link between BBC Media Action's audiences and political knowledge, one of the key drivers of political participation.

Bivariate analysis

Bivariate analysis shows that exposure to BBC Media Action programming is significantly associated with higher levels of political knowledge. People regularly reached by BBC Media Action governance programming have, on average, a score of 5.92 on a knowledge scale of 0–10, while unexposed people only have a score of 4.60. The T-test shows that this difference of 1.32 is significant at 0.001 level.[54]

At the bivariate level knowledge is also associated with:

- **Gender** – Men have an average political knowledge score of 5.07, while women only have an average score of 4.47. The T-test shows that this difference of 0.60 is significant at 0.001 level.[55]
- **Location** – People living in urban areas have, on average, a political knowledge score of 5.05, while people living in rural areas only have an average score of 4.63. This difference of 0.42 is significant with $\alpha = 0.001$.[56]
- **Age** – Political knowledge strongly increases between the ages of 15–24 and 25–34, then it gradually falls for older age categories, particularly 65 and above.[57]
- **Education** – Political knowledge increases with higher levels of education.[58]
- **Income** – Political knowledge increases with higher levels of income.[59]
- **Marital status** – Divorced people and widowed people in particular report, on average, lower levels of political knowledge. Married people – whether or not living with a spouse – and particularly those in a marriage where the husband has more than one wife, report on average higher levels of political knowledge.[60]
- **Interest in politics** – Political knowledge consistently increases across levels of interest.[61]
- **Membership of groups** – Active members have an average political knowledge score of 5.13, while people who are not active members in any group have an average score of 4.35. This difference of 0.78 is significant at 0.001 level.[62]

Multivariate analysis

As might be expected, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming is strongly associated with higher perceived knowledge of governance issues. Multivariate analysis shows that this finding holds when taking all other potentially intervening factors into account (such as demographic or socio-political characteristics). As Table 3 shows, BBC Media Action audiences report that their political knowledge is 0.653 higher on a scale of 0–10 than those who have not watched or listened to its programmes.

Variables	B	St. err. B	β
Exposure (compared with not exposed)			
Exposure to at least one governance programme	.653***	.044	.102
Interest in politics (compared with not interested at all)			
Not very interested	.603***	.055	.102
Somewhat interested	1.313***	.053	.247
Very interested	2.033***	.057	.361
Group activity (compared with not active at all)			
Active in a group	.311***	.039	.061
Gender (compared with men)			
Women	-.166***	.034	-.033
Age (compared with age group 15–24)			
25–34	.231***	.047	.042
35–44	.364***	.057	.055
45–54	.364***	.065	.046
55–64	.402***	.078	.040
65+	.385***	.090	.033
Education (compared with illiterate)			
Literate	.416***	.063	.055
Completed primary education	.629***	.059	.103
Completed secondary education	1.007***	.057	.188
Completed college or university	1.680***	.068	.241
Country (compared with Sierra Leone)			
Bangladesh	.686***	.071	.086
Nepal	.105	.062	.016
Kenya	.270***	.063	.036
Nigeria	.116*	.059	.018
Tanzania	-.269***	.061	-.040
Myanmar	-1.216***	.088	-.107
Location (compared with rural)			
Urban	.119**	.038	.022
Income (compared with medium level)			
Low	-.034	.043	-.006
High	.144*	.061	.016
Marital status (compared with married, living with spouse)			
Single	-.128**	.047	-.024
Married, not living with spouse	-.035	.079	-.003
Divorced/separated	-.196	.123	-.010
Widowed	-.149	.088	-.012
In a marriage where the husband has more than one wife	.857***	.170	.033
Living with partner	.489*	.192	.017
Constant	2.353***	.090	
Adjusted R square	.213		
N	23,621		

* = p < 0.05; ** = p <0.01; *** = p <0.001

From this analysis, it is clear that increased political knowledge is associated with a number of demographic and socio-political variables. The strongest positive association is between exposure and interest in politics, rising to an increase of 2.033 for respondents who are very interested in politics when compared with those with no interest at all.

Education and age are also important predictors of political knowledge. Respondents with the highest level of education (having completed college or university) have a self-reported level of knowledge that is 1.68 higher than those who are illiterate.

Interaction effects

This section looks at the interaction between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes and other variables, and the effect of this on political knowledge.

Although women's average knowledge of political issues is lower than men's,[63] data analysis suggests no significant difference in the strength of the interaction between exposure and men's and women's levels of knowledge.

Compensation effects

There are several demographic and socio-political characteristics that combine with exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes to produce a compensation effect.

Interest in politics

This study's data shows that political knowledge is positively associated with several demographic and socio-political characteristics. The factor with the strongest relationship to knowledge is interest in politics, as stated above.

The highest levels of political interest are therefore associated with higher political knowledge. However, looking at interest in politics in combination with exposure highlights a strongly positive relationship between exposure and knowledge for the group with no interest. In addition, for people with higher interest in politics, the association between exposure and knowledge decreases. Because the average levels of knowledge are lower for people with a lower interest in politics, it is possible to conclude that exposure to governance programming seems to have a compensation effect, narrowing the "gap" in knowledge, particularly between people with no interest in politics and those with higher levels of interest in politics.

Age

Political knowledge also increases for older age groups. When compared with the 15–24-year-old group (the youngest age group surveyed and

therefore the reference category for age), members of all other age groups reported on average higher levels of political knowledge. This difference increases, but only slightly, with age. Once again, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes seems to have a compensation effect on age. Looking at exposure among younger groups, the association with political knowledge appears stronger than for older groups, reducing the distance between the different age groups' levels of knowledge.

Education

A similar pattern applies to education. The relationship between exposure and political knowledge is strongest for the non-literate group. It is significantly weaker, though still positive, for literate people and for those with all higher levels of education. In all of these cases, exposure again seems to represent a form of compensation, since each education category is significantly associated with higher levels of political knowledge compared with the non-literate reference category.

Income

Income illustrates a similar dynamic, even though it only applies when comparing people with low incomes to those with a medium income. Poorer people report lower levels of political knowledge on average, but exposure is associated with higher levels of knowledge in this group. Therefore, exposure appears to have a compensation effect when analysed for different categories of income. People with high incomes, on the other hand, do not differ significantly from those with a medium income, either in terms of the average level of political knowledge they report or for the association between exposure and political knowledge.

Gender

There is no significant gender difference in the way that exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is associated with increased political knowledge. This means that there is no compensation or reinforcement effect for political knowledge on gender.

Part 3c: Discussion

This section highlights findings relating to the link between BBC Media Action's audiences and discussion, one of the key drivers of political participation.

This study's results indicate that exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is also positively associated with increased discussion about politics. Exposure is associated with an overall increase of 0.47 on the 0−10 discussion index (see Table 4).

Bivariate analysis

This study used bivariate analysis to quantify the associations between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and levels of political discussion. On average, exposed respondents have a discussion score of 5.65 on a 0–10 scale, while unexposed respondents only score 4.41. This difference of 1.24 is significant at the 0.001 level.[64] Overall, women report lower levels of political discussion than men. Discussion levels also increase with level of education, increased group activity and – most strongly – interest in politics. While levels of discussion fluctuate with age, there is no consistent pattern between exposure and age groups.

More precisely, at the bivariate level, political discussion is associated with:

- **Gender** – Men have an average discussion score of 4.97, whereas women score on average 4.10. This 0.86 difference is significant at 0.001 level.[65]
- **Location** – People in urban areas have, on average, a discussion score of 4.80, while people in rural areas only score 4.40. This 0.40 difference is significant at 0.001 level.[66]
- **Education** – Political discussion increases slightly with literacy. It increases strongly and constantly with further levels of education.[67]
- **Income** – Discussion levels increase very slightly from low-income groups to medium ones. Discussion increases strongly from medium-income groups to high-income ones.[68]
- **Marital status** – Widowed people report much lower levels of political discussion. Single people, people married but not living with a spouse, and above all those in a marriage where the husband has more than one wife, discuss politics more.[69]
- **Interest in politics** – Political knowledge increases considerably with interest in politics.[70]
- **Membership in groups** – People who are active members of at least one group report, on average, a discussion score of 5.29, while non-active members score only 3.66. This difference of 1.63 is significant at 0.001 level.[71]

Multivariate analysis

As hypothesised, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is positively associated with political discussion. Multivariate analysis confirms the T-test findings at bivariate level, while controlling for all other potentially intervening factors. As Table 4 shows, exposed respondents' frequency of political discussion is 0.47 higher on a scale of 0–10 than that of unexposed ones.

Variables	B	St. err. B	β
Exposure (compared with not exposed)			
Exposure to at least one governance programme	.470***	.049	.066
Interest in politics (compared with not interested at all)			
Not very interested	.450***	.061	.068
Somewhat interested	1.147***	.059	.193
Very interested	1.691***	.063	.268
Group activity (compared with not active at all)			
Active in a group	.610***	.043	.108
Gender (compared with men)			
Women	-.463***	.038	-.082
Age (compared with age group 15–24)			
25–34	.220***	.052	.035
35–44	.336***	.063	.046
45–54	.392***	.072	.044
55–64	.311***	.085	.028
65+	.265***	.099	.020
Education (compared with illiterate)			
Literate	.229***	.069	.027
Completed primary education	.508***	.065	.074
Completed secondary education	.811***	.062	.135
Completed college or university	1.119***	.074	.143
Country (compared with Sierra Leone)			
Bangladesh	-1.873***	.078	-.209
Nepal	-1.442***	.068	-.192
Kenya	-.506***	.069	-.060
Nigeria	-.586***	.065	-.080
Tanzania	-.729***	.067	-.098
Myanmar	-2.984***	.097	-.234
Location (compared with rural)			
Urban	-.022	.042	-.004
Income (compared with medium level)			
Low	-.139***	.047	-.021
High	.004	.067	.000
Marital status (compared with married, living with spouse)			
Single	-.215***	.051	-.035
Married, not living with spouse	-.018	.088	-.001
Divorced/separated	-.232	.136	-.011
Widowed	-.423***	.097	-.030
In a marriage where the husband has more than one wife	1.459***	.187	.051
Living with partner	-.237	.212	-.007
Constant	3.618***	.100	
Adjusted R square	.236		
N	23,621		

* = p < 0.05; ** = p <0.01; *** = p <0.001

The average frequency of political discussion also increases with age, education, group activity and (most of all) interest in politics. Respondents who are very interested in politics reported an average discussion score 1.691 higher than those not interested at all, on a 0–10 scale (all other conditions being equal). Political discussion is less common for low-income, single and widowed people, while it is more common for people in a marriage where the husband has more than one wife.

Interaction effects

This study looked at the interaction effect between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and other variables on political discussion.

Exposure is particularly "effective" (i.e. associated with higher discussion scores) for less educated people. It is less effective for people who completed secondary education. There are no significant differences in its effectiveness for people with higher education, or for people who are less interested in politics. When interacting with these variables, exposure again appears to have a compensation effect.

Data analysis shows no significant difference in the way exposure is associated with political discussion for men and for women. Women, on average, discuss politics less often.[72]

Compensation effects
Education
As with political participation and knowledge, the interaction effect between programme exposure and lower education yields higher levels of political discussion. This means that exposure to BBC Media Action programming appears to compensate for the normally low frequency of discussion in groups with lower levels of education, since the interaction effect becomes weaker as education level increases.

Interest in politics
A similar, even stronger dynamic is clear from looking at the interaction between political discussion and interest in politics. Exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes has a stronger association with political discussion for people who have no interest in politics than it does for individuals who are more interested in politics. BBC Media Action programming thus seems to compensate for the lower levels of political discussion reported by those not interested in politics.

Part 3d: Efficacy

This section highlights findings relating to the link between BBC Media Action's audiences and efficacy, one of the key drivers of political participation in the literature.

These results show only a weak positive association between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes and political efficacy. Exposure is associated with an overall increase of 0.097 on the 0–10 efficacy index (see Table 5).

Bivariate analysis

Looking at the bivariate relationship between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and political efficacy shows that, on average, exposed respondents have a higher efficacy score (5.47 on a 0–10 scale) than unexposed ones (5.42). However, this difference of 0.05 is not significant.[73]

Overall, political efficacy is lower for women, young people, people living in urban areas, more educated people, people with high incomes, non-active group members and people less interested in politics.

More precisely, at the bivariate level, political efficacy is associated with:

- **Gender** – Men have an average efficacy score of 5.50, whereas women score 5.37 on average. This 0.13 difference is significant at 0.001 level.[74]
- **Location** – People in urban areas have an average efficacy score of 5.20, while people in rural areas score 5.56. This 0.36 difference is significant at 0.001 level.[75]
- **Age** – Political efficacy constantly increases across age categories, especially between the 25–34 and 35–44 groups.[76]
- **Education** – This relationship is not linear. Political efficacy increases slightly with literacy and among people who have completed primary education. It decreases strongly among people who have completed secondary and higher education.[77]
- **Income** – This relationship also fluctuates. Political efficacy slightly increases from low- to medium-income groups and it strongly decreases from medium- to high-income groups. Overall, this relationship is not significant.[78]
- **Marital status** – Single people, people married but not living with a spouse and those living with their partner report lower political efficacy. Married people living with a spouse report higher political efficacy.[79]
- **Interest in politics** – Political efficacy constantly increases across levels of interest in politics.[80]
- **Membership of groups** – Surprisingly, political efficacy is slightly lower for active group members, who have an average efficacy score of 5.39, than for non-active members, whose average score is 5.49. This 0.1 difference is significant at the 0.001 level.[81]

Multivariate analysis

The relationship between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and political efficacy is positive. In contrast to what the T-test shows at bivariate level, it is also significant at the 0.01 level.

Nonetheless, this relationship is weak. As Table 5 shows, exposed respondents' level of political efficacy is only 0.097 higher on a scale of 0–10 than that of unexposed respondents.

Table 5: Multivariate regression model for efficacy (on a 0–10 scale)

Variables	B	St. err. B	β
Exposure (compared with not exposed)			
Exposure to at least one governance programme	.097**	.036	.020
Interest in politics (compared with not interested at all)			
Not very interested	.140**	.044	.031
Somewhat interested	.564***	.043	.141
Very interested	.813***	.046	.191
Group activity (compared with not active at all)			
Active in a group	.299***	.031	.078
Gender (compared with men)			
Women	-.025	.028	-.007
Age (compared with age group 15–24)			
25–34	-.002	.038	-.001
35–44	.022	.046	.004
45–54	.057	.052	.010
55–64	.078	.062	.010
65+	.187*	.072	.021
Education (compared with illiterate)			
Literate	-.106*	.050	-.019
Completed primary education	.070	.047	.015
Completed secondary education	.054	.045	.013
Completed college or university	-.103	.054	-.020
Country (compared with Sierra Leone)			
Bangladesh	1.468***	.057	.243
Nepal	0.343***	.050	.068
Kenya	.549***	.050	.096
Nigeria	-.271***	.047	-.055
Tanzania	.239***	.049	.048
Myanmar	1.645***	.071	.191
Location (compared with rural)			
Urban	-.140***	.030	-.035
Income (compared with medium level)			
Low	.121***	.034	.027
High	.106*	.049	.016
Marital status (compared with married, living with spouse)			
Single	-.009	.037	-.002
Married, not living with spouse	-.261***	.064	-.029
Divorced/separated	.072	.099	.005
Widowed	-.086	.070	-.009
In a marriage where the husband has more than one wife	-.101	.136	-.005
Living with partner	-.027	.154	-.001
Constant	4.441***	.073	
Adjusted R square	.108		
N	23,621		

* = p < 0.05; ** = p < 0.01; *** = p < 0.001

In addition to exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming, political efficacy is also correlated with:

- **Location** – As expected from the bivariate analysis, people living in urban areas report lower levels of political efficacy.
- **Income** – The results of bivariate analysis are partially contradictory. Both people with low and high incomes have higher efficacy scores than people with medium incomes, even though in the case of the high-income group the relationship is only significant at the 0.05 level.
- **Marital status** – Married people not living with their spouse have lower levels of political efficacy.

Age and education are only weakly associated with political efficacy, with people aged 65 and more being more politically effective and literate people less so. Looking at socio-political factors, both group activity and interest in politics are positively and significantly associated with political efficacy. Interest in politics is the variable most strongly associated with political efficacy, with very interested people having an average efficacy score 0.813 higher than those not at all interested in politics.

Interaction effects

This study looked at the interaction effect between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes and other variables on political efficacy. Analysis found that income, age and interest in politics significantly affect the relationship between exposure and efficacy.

Reinforcement effects
Income

This research found that exposure is more strongly associated with higher political efficacy levels for people with a low income. This mechanism can still be described as a "reinforcement effect", although the positive association between low income and efficacy is no longer significant in this model, which includes all of the significant interaction effects.

Compensation effects
Age

As with political participation and knowledge, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming is more "effective" (i.e. more strongly associated with higher political efficacy) for the youngest age category (15–24). B coefficients of the interaction terms are negative and significant for all of the other categories.[82] BBC Media Action governance programmes thus appear to compensate for the lower levels of political efficacy reported by the youngest respondents.

Interest in politics

The same mechanism is observed for the interaction between exposure to BBC Media Action programming and interest in politics. The category for which exposure has the strongest association with political efficacy is people who have no interest at all in politics.

Part 4
Discussion

This analysis of BBC Media Action's multi-country dataset provides insight into the link between exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and political participation, as well as the key drivers of this participation: political knowledge, discussion and efficacy. This study has explored if, and how, audience knowledge, attitudes and behaviours shift when regularly watching and listening to BBC Media Action debate and discussion programmes. While the analysis falls short of establishing causality, it does provide a level of insight into the differences between audiences and non-audiences in relation to BBC Media Action's interventions. This is an important step in the generation of evidence.[83]

The analysis also has a number of implications for the study of media, political participation and accountability in developing countries.

Media matters

Media clearly matters for political participation – at least when it comes to the sort of balanced and fair discussion programmes that BBC Media Action supports in the developing world. One of the most striking things about this study is that, while all of the programming analysed shared similar objectives around political participation and accountability (see Part 1), the programmes themselves and the audiences they cater for are quite diverse. In light of this, researchers might have anticipated that impact would vary substantially across countries; it did not.

"If certain marginalised sections of its audience – those who tend to participate less overall in politics – gain more by watching or listening to BBC Media Action media outputs, then these results suggest that discussion and debate formats can be a powerful tool for social inclusion."

Instead, the analysis shows three strong positive associations with exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming. Firstly, exposure to these programmes is strongly and positively associated with higher political participation. Second, exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming is strongly and positively associated with higher knowledge

and discussion about politics – two key drivers of political participation. The third and final result, which is perhaps most striking of all, is that exposure to BBC Media Action governance programmes is positively related to higher political participation among younger and less educated audiences.

If certain marginalised sections of its audience – those who tend to participate less overall in politics – gain more by watching or listening to BBC Media Action media outputs, then these results suggest that discussion and debate formats can be a powerful tool for social inclusion. Indeed, there may be an argument for targeting this sort of programme specifically at such marginalised groups in order to make their voices heard. However, the paper also finds that women exposed to BBC Media Action governance programmes, despite having higher levels of political participation than unexposed women, fell further behind in participation compared with male members of BBC Media Action's audience.

Measuring political efficacy

The analysis presented in this paper was conducted within a broader portfolio of research into how BBC Media Action governance programmes are affecting audiences around the world. While researchers have previously studied the relationship between governance variables such as political knowledge, discussion and efficacy in individual countries where BBC Media Action works, this is the first time the organisation has drawn upon a broader dataset to look at the effects of exposure to its programming.

As BBC Media Action examines these relationships in this broader dataset, it is also refining its understanding of how these different variables inter-relate across different contexts. Take political efficacy, for example. Earlier work, such as BBC Media Action's SEM study in Kenya referenced in Part 1, suggested that internal efficacy was an important factor in generating political participation. In this current analysis, efficacy was conceptualised slightly differently. The final efficacy construct was the result of an inductive research process, using a complete set of questions measuring different aspects of political efficacy and testing a number of different combinations through factor analysis. This allowed researchers to develop a construct that encompassed elements of internal efficacy and empowerment, which was supported by the data.

Several different ways of constructing the efficacy variable were examined and tested, including breaking the construct into its constituent parts and using efficacy constructs employed in some of BBC Media Action's previous research. Even after trying to better specify this variable, however, the revised efficacy construct deployed in this study shows only a weak association with exposure to BBC Media Action programming,

albeit a statistically significant one, at the multi-country level.[84] This leads to the conclusion that either BBC Media Action programmes are not associated with political efficacy in the way previously theorised, that this study's efficacy construct is not robust or that there is simply a difference in how things play out in local contexts, which is not fully captured in a cross-country analysis. Other researchers have also found the concept of efficacy difficult to describe and measure quantitatively, and this study confirms that methodological challenge. Further research is necessary to sort out the relevant weight of efficacy in future studies of political participation.

Political participation and accountability

Ultimately, of course, BBC Media Action cares about political participation not as an end in itself but as it feeds into a broader and more complete understanding of political accountability. Where citizens feel that they have the right, the opportunity and the mechanisms to demand action or justification, they are empowered as active participants in the decisions that affect their lives. Empowering people to participate politically can thus help to change the relationship between state and society, reducing the space between elected representatives and those they represent.

"Where citizens feel that they have the right, the opportunity and the mechanisms to demand action or justification, they are empowered as active participants in the decisions that affect their lives."

Demonstrating a consistent link between regular exposure to BBC Media Action governance programming and increased political participation enables some tentative conclusions about how accountability is supported in the countries where the organisation broadcasts. Across multiple countries, BBC Media Action audiences are more willing to engage in various forms of political action, both individually and collectively, than people who are not exposed to its programming. While the nature of these activities may vary across countries, they all suggest increased engagement with political and decision-making processes, a desire to hold leaders to account and a willingness to demand justification for decisions affecting the lives of their communities.

Whether or not the outcome of such engagement is satisfactory – whether people's questions are adequately answered or alternative policies implemented – is linked to the next level of the accountability relationship: government responsiveness to these demands. While not measured in this study, other BBC Media Action research delves deeper into such questions of answerability.

Part 5
Conclusion

This study is based on a combined dataset from seven countries in the developing world where BBC Media Action produces and broadcasts governance programmes. That the findings are so consistent across these seven countries is striking, as it provides a strong indication that BBC Media Action governance programmes are associated with increases in political participation, knowledge and discussion, despite marked differences in format, objectives and local context. [85]

"That the findings are so consistent across these seven countries is striking, as it provides a strong indication that BBC Media Action governance programmes are associated with increases in political participation, knowledge and discussion, despite marked differences in format, objectives and local context."

BBC Media Action can build on these results to shape its future research agenda in a variety of ways. First, it can continue to probe the link between political participation and other aspects of accountability, moving beyond the simple act of participation in political activities to explore the answerability side of this equation. Drawing on qualitative data from its governance programming in countries such as Afghanistan and the Palestinian Territories, BBC Media Action is beginning to probe how responsive governments are to the demands put to them by citizens in open forum media programmes – and, where they are not responsive, why not.

Second, BBC Media Action can also mine this dataset to explore other outcomes related to political participation. In a separate paper investigating these issues through the lens of social and behaviour change, the organisation is also looking at the shifting of social norms associated with participation. BBC Media Action considers these a critical part of the drivers of change, as they often function as enablers or barriers to change. The paper in progress looks at, inter alia, the norms in the "enabling environment" around the normalisation of violence. This report will be published in the coming months.

Third, with these cross-country results as a backdrop, BBC Media Action can now begin to revisit some of its country-level data in an

attempt to explain the influencing factors in different local contexts. Thus, for example, its work in Nigeria offers an opportunity to examine how diverse media formats (political debate, drama and magazine programmes) can foster different types of political participation. That work may also be able to shed light on how people receive and respond to governance programming in different parts of the country under widely varying media and governance landscapes.

Researchers also need to understand more about different patterns of political participation at country level – whether national or local, formal or informal – to explore where the forms of participation encouraged by BBC Media Action are most influencing government responsiveness. In addition, BBC Media Action needs to isolate how its programmes lead to increased political participation, in what context and among which groups of people.

Finally, research can also probe some of the more interesting findings from this analysis in further depth. Why media does not overcome gender gaps in political participation, for example, is the subject of a forthcoming BBC Media Action practice briefing. Specifically, BBC Media Action hopes to analyse the results across seven countries in more detail, before focusing on Nepal and Tanzania to examine the contextual constraints and facilitators on women's participation in politics, as well as what the organisation has done to engage and impact female audiences.

When combined, the consistent results amassed in this multi-country sample, together with insights from detailed local research, offer a much more comprehensive view of the role that media can play in encouraging political participation. In this way, BBC Media Action is analysing data on a topic that has been historically under-studied in the developing world and helping to build a comprehensive evidence base.

Endnotes

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25. The Madheshis are a non-Nepali speaking people residing in the Terai region of Nepal. Demands by the Madhesh movement, stoked by their perceived marginalisation during the process of developing Nepal's constitution, culminated in widespread violence around a region-wide strike in the summer of 2015.

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27. Larkin and Were (2013), *How do Political Debate Programmes Influence Political Participation? A Case Study from Nepal.*

28. See Cunliffe, J. 2015. How does Sema Kenya affect political participation? A Structural Equation Analysis. (title in italics), BBC Media Action, Unpublished manuscript, September. All fit statistics were found to be acceptable RMSEA = 0.029, 90% CI 0.027 to 0.030.

29. In 2011, BBC Media Action was awarded funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for a five-year "Global Grant". The overall aim of this grant was to contribute to improved outcomes in governance, health, resilience and humanitarian response across 14 countries, with a specific focus on fragile and conflict-affected states. Over the life cycle of the grant, governance programming has been broadcast in nine countries, and quantitative data collected in seven of these.

30. The research strategy implemented across the DFID Global Grant aimed to collect data at multiple time points in the project (generally, baseline, midline and endline). Due to differing project timelines, data was collected in different months and years, and based on costs and value-for-money considerations. In some instances, data was collected on fewer occasions (baseline and endline only, for example). It is also important to note that this paper was written before the conclusion of the project and therefore endline research activities in some countries have not been included in the combined dataset.

31. Data on media consumption by audiences beyond BBC Media Action programmes was also collected in some countries. While the authors recognise that exposure to other media may also be associated with changes in outcome variables, it was not possible to isolate the effect of BBC Media Action governance programmes compared with other media. This is because other governance programmes were not comparable across different countries, and because researchers did not collect media consumption data in a consistent way across these countries.

32. Factor analysis confirmed that the combination of individual items was a reasonable fit for each construct, giving confidence that the constructs were all internally coherent.

33. Likelihood to vote was included as part of the participation index, as voting is one of the most fundamental political actions an individual can take. This paper uses intention to vote as a better indication than actually voting since being able to vote is dependent on multiple external factors, including access to polling stations, security considerations and – not least – the timing of elections. Intention to vote measures whether a respondent would vote if there were an election in the near future, all other things being equal.

34. The knowledge measure was based on perceived knowledge rather than objective knowledge (ability to answer questions about politics correctly). Objective knowledge was tested in several countries, but the level of difficulty of the questions presented a consistent problem: they were either so easy that the vast majority could answer them without any trouble or too difficult for the majority of respondents to answer correctly. In addition, reliably choosing factual questions of comparable difficulty between countries was almost impossible.

35. Urban/rural location is not significantly associated with exposure at bivariate level. It is included in the model because it is recognised as relevant in the literature on political participation and on media. Moreover, it is significantly associated with participation at bivariate level.

36. This variable results from the combination of two different questions in the survey. The first was about respondents' literacy levels (ability to read a text in their mother tongue). The second was about the level of formal education respondents had completed. Researchers combined the two, assuming that respondents who had completed at least primary education were also literate.

37. In the case of income, the "medium" level is the reference category (instead of the "low" one) because this is by far the largest category: N = 15,041 (corresponding to 66.1% of valid cases).

38. Levene's test for checking the assumption of equality of variances was conducted for each T-test, with α = 0.01.

39. Depending on the nature of the variables considered, different types of significance testing were conducted: T-tests for means difference, Mann-Whitney U-tests, Pearson's R and Spearman's Rho correlation coefficients and Chi-squared significance tests were conducted to test the association of each pair of variable. All significance tests were conducted with α = 0.01.

40. In the case of income, the "medium" level is the reference category, as noted above (see note 38).

41. The researchers only considered interaction effects between exposure and gender in within-country models.

42. $T(5316) = 25.096$, $p < 0.001$. A T-test is a hypothesis test used to determine whether two samples (in this case, the "exposed" group and the "unexposed" group) are significantly different and, specifically, if their means are significantly different.

43. $T(23142) = 33.368$, $p < 0.001$.

44. $T(23588) = 7.377$, $p < 0.001$.

45. Spearman's Rho = 0.208, $p<0.001$. N = 23,562.

46. Spearman's Rho = 0.073, $p<0.001$. N = 23,074.

47. Spearman's Rho = -0.075, $p<0.001$. N = 22,729. As explained in note 38, the reference category for income is "medium" level.

48. $F(6) = 122.262450$ ($p<0.001$). N = 23,296.

49. Spearman's Rho = 0.286, p<0.001. N = 23,192.

50. T(23373) = 47.611, p < 0.001.

51. Although the authors recognise that exposure to other media (including news and current affairs programmes broadcast on TV, radio and online) could have a significant influence on the outcomes that are the focus of this study, the variety of sources, content and availability in each country did not allow for standardisation across the dataset. Therefore, this variable is not included in this analysis.

52. Exposure's interactions with location, income and marital status were not significant at the 0.01 level.

53. Tables containing coefficients from the regression models with interaction effects can be found in the Technical appendix.

54. T(6174) = 32.091, p<0.001.

55. T(22950) = 17.926, p < 0.001.

56. T(15841) = 11.841, p < 0.001.

57. Spearman's Rho = 0.024, p<0.001. N = 23,002.

58. Spearman's Rho = 0.267, p<0.001. N = 22,519.

59. Spearman's Rho = 0.122, p<0.001. N = 22,180.

60. F (6) = 20.013192 (p<0.001). N = 22,744.

61. Spearman's Rho = 0.334, p<0.001. N = 23,192.

62. T(22088) = 23.639, p < 0.001.

63. Tables containing coefficients from the regression models with interaction effects can be found in the Technical appendix.

64. T(6122) = 26.148, p<0.001.

65. T(23368) = 23.661, p < 0.001.

66. T(16798) = 10.361, p < 0.001.

67. Spearman's Rho = 0.211, p<0.001. N = 22,887.

68. Spearman's Rho = 0.048, p<0.001. N = 22,547.

69. F (6) = 54.257 (p<0.001). N = 23,109.

70. Spearman's Rho = 0.287, p<0.001. N = 23,043.

71. T(22597) = 46.072, p < 0.001.

72. Tables containing coefficients from the regression models with interaction effects can be found in the Technical appendix.

73. T(6072) = 1.661 (p = 0.097).

74. T(23057) = 5.120, p < 0.001.

75. T(15795) = -13.503, p < 0.001.

76. Spearman's Rho = 0.069, p < 0.001. N = 23,098.

77. Spearman's Rho = -0.033, p < 0.001. N = 22,627.

78. Spearman's Rho = -0.007, p = 0.139. N = 22,288.

79. F (6) = 23.869 (p<0.001). N = 22,844.

80. Spearman's Rho = 0.155, p < 0.001. N = 22,824.

81. T(21894) = 3.790, p < 0.001.

82. Tables containing coefficients from the regression models with interaction effects can be found in the Technical appendix.

83. For a comprehensive discussion of the debate surrounding evidence for the impact of media and development projects, see: Abraham-Dowsing, K., Godfrey, A., Khor, Z. (2014) *Reframing the evidence debates: a view from the media for development sector.* BBC Media Action Working Paper [online]. Available from: www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/publications-and-resources/ research/working-paper/working-paper-evidence [Accessed 26 September 2016].

84. Despite the poor results for efficacy for the overall dataset, quantitative analysis in some individual countries has demonstrated significant associations between exposure and various types of efficacy.

85. Individual country results, and results for individual forms of participation, are available in the Technical appendix.

Appendix: BBC Media Action Governance Programmes

Country	Programme	Format	Platform
Bangladesh	*Sanglap* (Dialogue)	Debate	TV/Radio
Kenya	*Sema Kenya* (Kenya Speaks)	Debate	TV
Nepal	*Sajha Sawal* (Common Questions)	Debate	TV
Nigeria	Talk Your Own	Debate	Radio
	Mutattauna (Let's Discuss)	Drama	Radio
Myanmar	*Lin Lait Kyair Sin* (Bright Young Stars)	Magazine	Radio
	Current Affairs	Debate	TV
	Lively News	Magazine	Radio
Sierra Leone	*Fo Rod* (Crossroads)	Magazine	Radio
	Tok Bot Salone (Talk about Sierra Leone)	Debate	Radio
Tanzania	*Haba Na Haba* (Slowly but Surely)	Magazine	Radio

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