

## **Executive Summary**

### **Deliberative Polling® in Uganda on Resilience Issues in the Mt Elgon Region**

The first “Deliberative Polls” in Africa were conducted in July by the Eastern Africa Resilience Innovation Lab of Makerere University with support from USAID. Deliberative Polling® engages scientific samples of a population to consider issues in depth in face-to-face discussions over several hours or days. Before and after questionnaires show the changes in opinion and qualitative analysis of the discussion can shed light on the motivations for change as people engage the issues and learn more.

The Deliberative Polls can serve a key function for policy makers in a development context. What policies would the public accept, or not accept and for what reasons if they were really motivated to think about the issues with good information? Rather than conventional polls where the public will not be informed in detail about public problems, or focus groups that are too small to be representative, or open meetings, which can be dominated by those motivated to show up by intense feelings, the Deliberative Poll provides representative and informed opinion. This is the first time it has been applied to development policies.

Over 70 Deliberative Polls have been conducted in 20 countries around the world.<sup>1</sup> But these two DPs were the first in Africa. Could the process be usefully applied here?

Scientific random samples of the population were gathered for two days of deliberation in each of two districts in the Mt Elgon region, Bududa and Butaleja. The samples were recruited through random selection of households and random selection of participants within the households. In each district, only 11 people turned down the invitation to take the initial survey. In Bududa, 210 initial interviews conducted and 201 completed the two days of deliberation. In Butaleja, 232 initial interviews were conducted with 217 attending the two day deliberation. These are remarkably high response rates by international standards. The agenda of issues was developed by an extensive advisory group of stakeholders, NGOs, academic experts and government officials. Their work built on previous focus groups and key informant interviews in the two districts.

The topic was how to deal with the environmental disasters and population pressures that challenge life in these vulnerable communities. The two days of discussion were divided into three topics: Resettlement Management, Land Management and Population Pressure. The advisory committee, composed of 7 ResilientAfrica Network staff, 2 Makerere University faculty members, 2 representatives from each of the districts, 3 Stanford University CDD staff and a representative from Office of the Prime Minister, identified policy options under each of these headings that might feasibly be implemented in Bududa and Butaleja.

### **Results from Bududa District**

In Bududa, 15 of the 36 policy options changed significantly with deliberation. The changes were mostly in the direction of increased support for the proposed options. Some options started high and went significantly higher. Rezoning high-risk areas for no settlement went from 76% viewing the proposal as important to 85%. Supporting host families to help

---

® Deliberative Polling® is a registered trademark of James S. Fishkin. The trademark is for quality control and benefits the Stanford Center for Deliberative Democracy.

<sup>1</sup> For more on Deliberative Polling see <http://cdd.stanford.edu> The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford is one of the partners in this project



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID  
**Higher Education  
Solutions Network**



those who move went from 67% to 78%. Some of the changes were large, such as raising funds to support the work of the local disaster management committees, rising from 58% to 79%. There was significant increased support for community action: to create more rice schemes (but not in the wetland) from 48% to 57%, for taking responsibility to desilt the riverbeds (from 52% to 64%) and for building sanitation drains to reduce malaria (from 87% to 94%). On population pressure, there was a significant increase in support for the notion that “families should consider their resources in planning the size of their families.” This proposal increased from 76% to 87% endorsing its importance.

Regarding the top priorities in Bududa, some changed significantly after deliberation, while others started high and remained high or even slightly higher after deliberation. Since all the proposals were rated on the same 0 to 10 scale, the mean scores at the end of the deliberations yield a ranking of top priorities. Consider that the high ratings before deliberation were offered before the participants had considered all the pros and cons, before they had heard the arguments both for and against the proposal. After deliberation, the participants have talked about these issues in depth. Hence the top priorities after deliberation have survived all the considerations offered in the briefings, by their fellow citizens, and by the competing experts in the plenary sessions.

The top priority of all the 36 proposals after deliberation in Bududa was “the community should encourage girls to go to school as well as boys.” Another top priority after deliberation was establishing Health Center 2s in the small villages. For more details on all the 36 proposals, see the Report.

### **Results from Butaleja District**

Butaleja showed significant changes with deliberation on 11 of the 36 policy proposals. Rezoning “high risk areas for no settlement” had only 46% endorsing its importance before deliberation. But after deliberation the level had risen twenty points to 67%. Support for an early warning system using text messaging, went down from 60% to 42%. Cell phone coverage and electricity reliability seemed to be concerns with this method of early warning. By contrast, support for the early warning system using sirens went up from 79% to 92%. While there was an increase in support for communities to manage the wetlands during the dry season (from 70% to 82%) there was a drop in support for the idea that communities should maintain the water channels during the wet season (from 78% to 67%) and that communities should be responsible for desilting riverbeds (from 55% to 42%). Discussions showed an awareness of the machinery and scale of work required to get these tasks done. On the issue of population pressure, there was an increase in support for the government enforcing the minimum age for marriage of 18 years. This increased from 87% believing it important to 94%.

The proposal with the highest priority was government assisting in drilling for clean water. Second highest priority was “the community should encourage girls to go to school as well as boys.” Ratings of all 36 proposals are available in the Report.

In both projects the deliberations of random samples, recruited with very high response rates, showed significant changes of opinion. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses show that the opinions changed for coherent reasons. The resulting conclusions show which policies the local populations would support and which ones they would not—if they had an opportunity to really think about the issues, get good information and come to a considered judgment. These conclusions deserve to be taken seriously by both local and national policymakers.