Experiential Learning and the Power of Women

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The Challenge



- Huge natural resource management (NRM) challenges in South Asia – especially water related;
- Massive NGO and government investments in NRM;
- Strong focus on technology;
- Continuous management often poor;
- Community based organizations rarely functional.

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Experiential Learning, esp. games…



…as structured spaces to acquire knowledge by experiencing, reflecting, and experimenting,

…simulate long term decisions in short time,

…encourage discussion of situation,

…try different institutional arrangements,

…shape “mental models” and understanding of relationships (biophysical and social)

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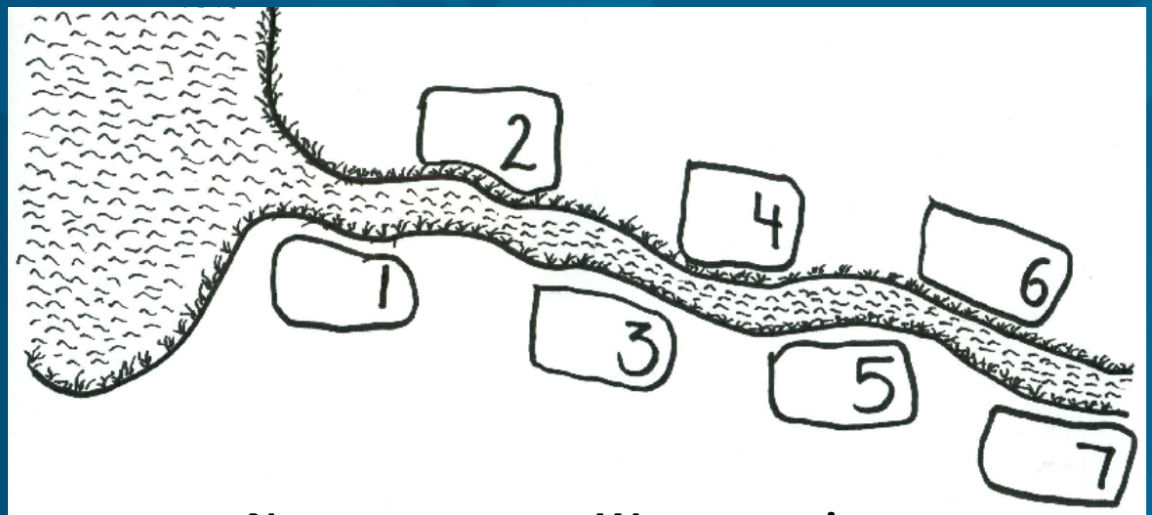
Tool design

- Common Pool Resource Game based on Irrigation Games by Janssen et al., 2011 & Cárdenas et al., 2013)
- 2 decisions: contribution to dam maintenance (resource provision) and choice between crops with different water demand (appropriation)
- Asymmetric access to water
- 5 rounds with and 5 rounds without communication
- Debriefing



	Net return per ha in INR	Water requirement per ha in cum
Wheat	15000	5500
Gram	13000	3000

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Experiential Learning, esp. games



- Interventions were carried out in 56 randomly selected villages (total of 784 participants) in Madhya Pradesh in India.
- Players were farmers relying on irrigation water for their livelihood
- Baseline and follow up surveys with community leaders on real life water management and local governance indicators in treated and 27 control villages.

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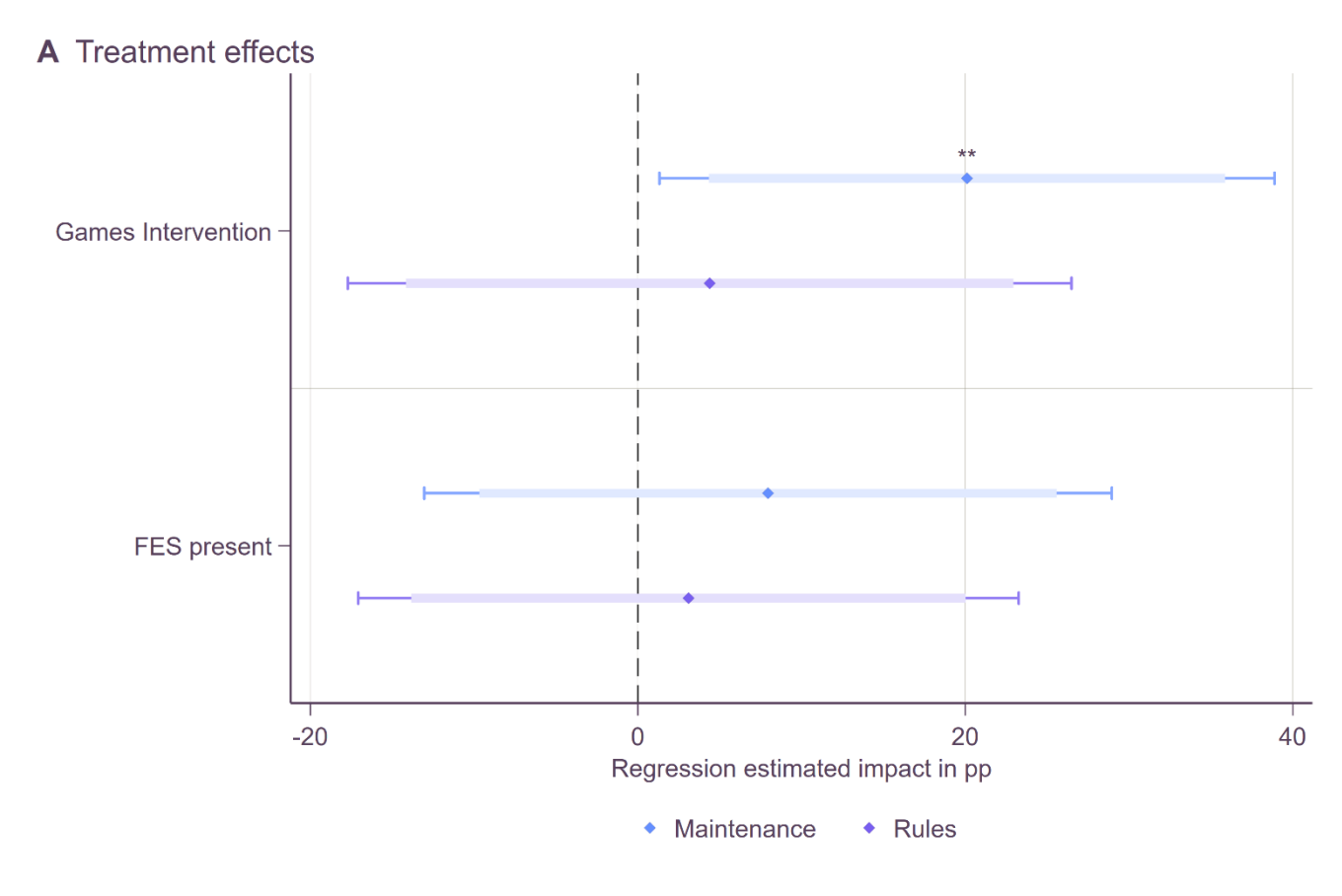
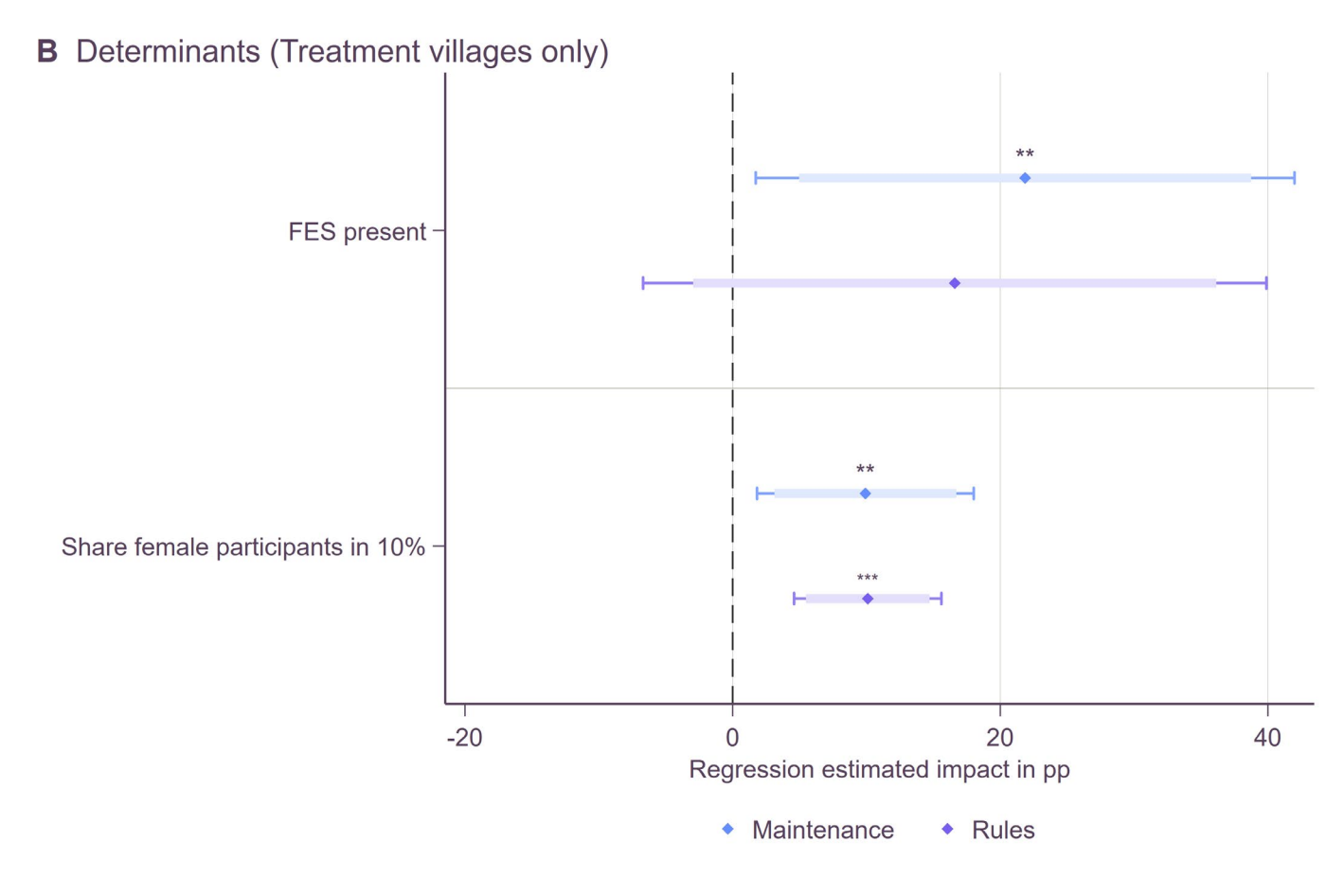
Results 1 – comparison treatment & control



- Almost 2 years after the intervention, village key informants report with 20 percent probability more often maintenance activities in treated than in control sites.
- No effect on local rules.
- No selection bias by partnering NGO.

Results 2 – process controls



- Impact on maintenance activities more likely at sites of partnering NGO.
- The more women participated, the more likely is impact on maintenance and local rules.

Discussion



- New evidence that games can trigger behavioral change in NRM (see also Meinzen-Dick et al. 2018, Meyers et al. 2021).
- Games work best if combined with other interventions (see also Wouters et al. 2013).
- Relation between process participation of women and behavioral change (see also Cook et al. 2019, Masuda et al. 2022)

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Thank you

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