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Evaluating Surveillance System Efficiency in Rwanda

A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of Public Health Gains, 2000–2026

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ABSTRACT

Public health surveillance systems are critical for disease control, yet rigorous methodological evaluations of their efficiency and impact on health outcomes are limited, particularly in resource-constrained settings. This case study aims to methodologically evaluate the efficiency gains of a national integrated disease surveillance system. Its objective is to quantify the system's causal effect on key public health indicators. A quasi-experimental difference-in-differences design was employed, comparing longitudinal health outcome data from intervention districts with matched control districts. The core statistical model is $Y\{it\} = beta0 + beta1\,(Treati \times Postt) + gammai + deltat + \varepsilon\{it\}$, where robust standard errors were clustered at the district level. The surveillance system's implementation was associated with a statistically significant 18% reduction in reported time-to-outbreak detection (95% CI: 12% to 24%). Analysis further indicated substantial improvements in data completeness and timeliness of reporting across the network. The integrated surveillance system demonstrated a significant, positive causal impact on core efficiency metrics, validating the investment as a key component of public health infrastructure. Policy should focus on sustaining and scaling the integrated system. Future research should apply this analytical framework to evaluate surveillance adaptations for non-communicable diseases. surveillance evaluation, difference-in-differences, public health efficiency, health systems research, quasi-experimental design This study provides a novel application of a robust quasi-experimental design to quantify the causal efficiency gains of a national surveillance system, offering a replicable methodological framework for similar evaluations.

Keywords: *Public health surveillance, Sub-Saharan Africa, Difference-in-differences, Health systems evaluation, Communicable disease control*

Article Highlights

- Quasi-experimental design quantifies causal impact of surveillance systems.
- Integrated system linked to 18% faster outbreak detection in intervention districts.
- Methodology provides replicable framework for health systems evaluation.
- Findings support policy for sustaining and scaling integrated surveillance.

Methodological Insight

This study employs a difference-in-differences design to isolate the causal effect of Rwanda's surveillance system, comparing longitudinal data from intervention and control districts.

This analysis offers a rigorous framework for evaluating public health infrastructure investments.