

Discovering institutions that work for poor people

Welcome to the third issue of APPP's e-newsletter, dedicated to the emerging findings of our seven research streams!

As readers know, the goal of our research is 'to discover institutions that work for poor people'. We aim to do this primarily on the basis of African experience and the study of Africa's own institutions. We share the view that standard prescriptions for 'good governance' fail because they are not properly anchored in local realities: they do not 'work with the grain' of the host societies.

APPP is an integrated programme. We are examining governance issues in seven different policy areas, but our aim is to uncover patterns which cut across these areas. Our objective is to build a body of evidence-based theory about the institutional factors which influence for better or worse the provision of the public goods that are vital for economic and social progress in Africa.

We think we are making headway in that direction! We invite readers to judge for themselves by consulting the following updates from each of the seven APPP research streams. We welcome comments and expressions of interest in our work.

David Booth, Programme Director

Seven research updates

1. Business & politics 1: developmental patrimonialism?
2. Business & politics 2: cotton sector reform
3. States bureaucracies
4. Education & Religion
5. Parliamentarians
6. Justice
7. Local governance

Business & politics 1: developmental patrimonialism?

Led by Tim Kelsall, this research stream is looking for an answer to the question 'How to create a good investment climate by working with, rather than against, African socio-political realities?' Researchers have examined the 'patrimonial' dimensions of successful Southeast Asian states and revisited critical historical experiences in Africa. Fieldwork has been undertaken in Malawi and Tanzania, and is ongoing in Rwanda, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

The emerging finding is that, contrary to usual assumptions, neopatrimonial regimes can be compatible with a strong investment climate. But this happens only when two conditions are met: the policies are right and the process for recycling economic rents is of a centralised, long time-horizon type. Under multi-party systems, party holding companies may be a suitable mechanism for achieving these conditions.

These findings speak to both investment-climate specialists and decision makers at country level. 'Developmental patrimonialism' (DP) is not a new 'model', but where it exists donors should cut it some slack, and where all else is failing, it is an option to be considered.



Mwanza city central business district in Tanzania

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For details, see www.institutions-africa.org

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Business & politics 2: cotton sector reforms

This second 'economic' stream has been given a more sectoral focus under the leadership of Renata Serra. Based on comparative analysis of reform processes in West Africa, it is identifying the institutional conditions which work best for market coordination, the key public good often missing in cotton economies after market liberalisation. Research is taking place in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Mali.



Working at the cotton market - filling the truck: The road to Djenne, Mali

An emerging finding is that the more successful reform models involve a measure of endogenous 'institutional creativity'. Unless domestic actors make deliberate choices among the recommendations proffered by donors, policies are liable to be incoherent. The combination of privatisation and multi-party politics seems least favourable from this point of view. Empowering farmer organisations, on the other hand, helps coordination by constructing inter-dependencies among interest groups and enabling market principles to be reconciled with social norms.

With its close attention to political and social factors in successful reform, this research will be relevant to the policy communities of the study countries as well to addressing the overall research questions of the APPP.

State bureaucracies: forests, irrigation and livestock

Building on work on 'everyday corruption' in West Africa, this stream is making a close study of the practical norms and logics of accountability that shape the provision of public goods by the forest, irrigation and livestock services in Senegal and Niger. Led by Giorgio Blundo, it is asking about the conditions under which hybrid or 'informally privatised' forms of public service delivery can perform comparatively well and become an acceptable option given the failure of reforms based on international 'best practices'.

Emerging findings about forestry include the value of local management styles which work with the grain of the professional culture of the foresters, and the importance of negotiated compromises between professionals and local communities over application of the law. Social affinities play an important part in these negotiations. Factors working against their success



Three different uniforms for the same job: Forestry agents in Senegal.

include frequent changes of staff postings ('to reduce corruption') and discontinuities in project support ('because of alleged corruption').

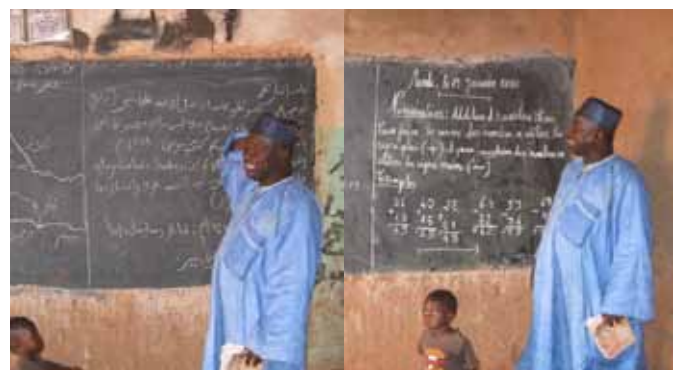
Research is ongoing to establish how far these findings also apply in irrigation and livestock services, and to articulate their policy implications.

Educational reform: religion and the state

This stream is focusing on the shifting relationship between the state and social forces in the countries of the Sahel. Responding



One of the experimental reformed Qur'anic schools in Niamey, Niger. Note the non-permanent building materials



Medersa, Bamako rive droite: Geography is taught in Arabic, but Mathematics lessons are in French

to parental pressures and the difficulty of raising enrolments and quality in the secular public school system, governments have been experimenting with hybrid types of school which adopt elements of Koranic education. This stream, coordinated by Leonardo Villalón and Mahaman Tidjani Alou, is tracking these reforms in Niger, Mali and Senegal.



Franco-arabic collège at Keur Madiabel, Senegal

There are differences of approach across the countries but also some commonalities. Everywhere, the interest is in forging a real hybrid combining Arabic-based religious literacy with the ‘employability’ provided by education in French. The new schools are proving popular, especially for girls. An outstanding question is whether ‘working with the grain’ in this way is compatible with educational quality enhancement, in view of the expanded curriculum it entails.

Whatever the answer, these changes exemplify the fact that henceforth development organisations in the Sahel are dealing with a new kind of state and public policy making, to which they need to adapt.

Local justice and dispute settlement

Led by Richard Crook with CDD-Ghana, this stream is addressing the question: how can African states provide judicial services which are legitimate, accessible and effective for ordinary citizens? It hypothesises that services are more likely to have these qualities if they draw upon local cultural repertoires.

The research shows empirically that popular beliefs in the study areas of southern Ghana do not correspond to common stereotypes about the nature of ‘traditional’ justice. Comparing the services provided by magistrate’s courts, the Commission on Human Rights & Administrative Justice and customary land courts, it finds that the magistrates work in the way that is most congruent with popular values. The CHRAJ is strong on access and speed, but its non-enforceable mediation is not a popular feature. The customary courts are least congruent with popular values and considered over-formal.

These findings suggest that what work best are hybrid arrangements in which professional standards are combined with procedural flexibility which accommodates the preferences of ordinary citizens.

The implications have been discussed with Judicial Service of Ghana and other policymakers.

Parliamentarians: managing conflicting expectations

Members of national parliaments have an important role in democratic theory as guarantors of legislative quality and executive performance. This is reflected in the importance given to parliamentary strengthening in the promotion of better governance for development. But in Africa MPs are subject clientelist pressures from individuals and their constituencies which commonly swamp their ability to provide the public goods of legislation and oversight. Managed successively by Staffan I. Lindberg and E. Gyimah-Boadi, this stream has been exploring the conditions under which MPs in Ghana manage the different expectations placed on them in more or less satisfactory ways.

The initial results from analysis of two large surveys on either side of the 2008 elections in Ghana have revealed significant variations in the ways MPs define their role. Work is now proceeding in a more observational mode in search of ways parliamentarians might perform their constitutional role more effectively while working with the grain of Ghana’s political culture.

The conclusions will be relevant to constitutional reforms and parliamentary strengthening efforts in other countries with single-member constituency systems.

Local governance and public goods

Led by Diana Cammack, this large stream of work is asking: what features of the governance of public goods at local level are associated with greater ability to address the key bottlenecks in provision? Research teams are in the field in Malawi, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda, with associated PhD projects in those countries plus Ghana, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. The



Water & sanitation: The Nasolo River, Ndirande, Malawi



focus is on water and sanitation, safe motherhood, public order and security, and the facilitation of markets and enterprise.

The first phase of fieldwork pointed to three immediate determinants of the ability to address public-goods bottlenecks: the extent of policy-driven institutional incoherence, the level of political interest in imposing disciplines on providers, and the scope for locally anchored self-help initiatives.

Consideration of the wider enabling conditions is leading to critical re-examination of the interactions between aid and policy in 'young democracies' and to proposals to reform ways of providing external support to local collective action.

The policy implications are major. They are also highly consistent with the conclusions emerging from other parts of the programme.



Facilitation of markets: Tax collection, Say, Niger



Public order: Chief's dogari, Balleyara, Niger

Some recent and forthcoming publications

- Kelsall and Booth, Developmental patrimonialism?, Working Paper 9, July 2010
- Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, Local governance and public goods in Niger, Working Paper 10, July 2010
- Diana Cammack and Edge Kanyongolo, Local Governance and public goods in Malawi, Working Paper 11, July 2010
- Cammack, Kelsall with Booth, Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Malawi, Working Paper 12, Jul 2010
- David Booth, 'Towards a theory of local governance and public goods' provision in sub-Saharan Africa, Working Paper 13, Aug 2010
- Crook et al, 'Popular concepts of justice & fairness in Ghana, Working Paper 14, Oct 2010
- David Booth, 'Aid, institutions and governance: what have we learned', Development Policy Review 28(1, supplement), forthcoming in January 2011
- Richard Crook and David Booth (eds.) 'Going with the grain? Rethinking African governance and development', IDS Bulletin 42(2), forthcoming March 2011

Publications



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